CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT

IN GREEK PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

The investigator in this study aimed to explore and understand assessment in Greek primary classrooms and its potential impact on teaching and learning. Classroom observations, a questionnaire, and informal interviews with teachers and pupils provided rich data regarding teachers' views on assessment's utility and the ways they apply it. The findings confirmed what research says about the importance of classroom assessment, how complex and multi-purpose powerful process it is, thus teachers need to be aware of its potential.

Almost a decade after the introduction of progressive reforms it was found that Greek teachers, typically, were not fully applying them. The frequent changes of the assessment system combined with lack of assessment training, a long experience in a traditional pedagogy, pragmatic constraints such as class size, and shortage of time, eventually confused many teachers and caused undesirable impacts on children's learning. Typically, the teachers were interested in outcomes, instead of processes, they were conducting a whole class teaching, and they were inhibiting children's creativity. Though grading and homework were officially discontinued, teachers were widely applying them. All these show a traditional, teacher-centred pedagogy.

These teachers were assessing in order to fulfil intellectual, psychological, managerial and social purposes. Explicitly they were intending to assess the basics, and they were showing a strong commitment towards the children. Implicitly, however, they were imposing an absolute control on children's speech, knowledge and behaviour.

Teachers' insufficient awareness of the potential of assessment to promote or inhibit learning, combined with a lack of differentiation often had undesirable effects, in particular on the less able children who were experiencing continuous failure and disappointment.

Teachers had a vague idea of objectives. They focussed on the step by step teaching activities. Overall, teachers were assessing unsystematically, spontaneously, without focussing on objectives, and were keeping mental records.

Despite the highly centralised education system it seemed that the Government was unable to police their policies. As the discovery of the different assessment styles indicates teacher practices were derived from their habit and ideology rather than from the official directives.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated both to my beloved wife, Eleni, for her tremendous support and encouragement during the long time I have been struggling to finish it, and to my son, Harry who also greatly motivated me.

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Moreover, I would like to acknowledge the Greek teachers and the pupils who participated in the study. Finally, I am grateful to the staff of the Education Library, and to Anne Mallitte for her secretarial support.

March, 1995 Ioannis Mavrommatis

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is an original work, and written by myself alone, and not previously submitted for any purpose, for any other degree or award; that all the sources that I have used have been fully acknowledged in the text and in the references.

Signed:.....

Date.....28-2-95.....

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores classroom assessment processes in Greek primary schools, and reports findings that were collected during the spring term of the school year 1989-1990, from a sample of 372 primary school teachers. The study was funded by the Greek State Scholarship Foundation.

The pervasiveness of assessment in the classroom, its potential to assist learning and its use and misuse by the researcher for many years as a primary school teacher generated an interest to explore it further, in order to widen his understanding of assessment's potential to assist or prohibit learning.

During the period 1981-1985 some progressive reforms were introduced in the Greek education system (chapter 6). However, the curriculum innovations had not been matched by corresponding developments in assessment techniques and testing to monitor the quality and effectiveness of them. After some years of implementation these reforms raised public criticism among others, of primary school teaching effectiveness, of poor quality of outcomes, of the abolition of formal assessment, and the regular communication with parents. This criticism was another reason for the investigator to carry out this piece of research.

The prime aim of this study was to further the investigator's understanding of classroom assessment processes and their potential to assist learning. In addition, to show how important assessment is in the classroom, and the necessity for teachers to become fully aware of its potential.

This study also aims to estimate the gap between the study's teachers' practices and current international practice. In addition, it could help the development of new

ideas regarding the effectiveness of classroom assessment and suggest solutions to relevant problems.

Classroom assessment is an inseparable part of teaching and learning. Teachers however, are not fully aware of its potential to assist or prohibit learning. This thesis therefore, explores the extent of the problem and examines the undesirable side effects of this ignorance and how it could be reduced.

In the course of exploring classroom assessment this thesis attempts to answer the following questions that are closely related to the problem:

1. How important is assessment in the classroom?
2. Do teachers need to be aware of its potential? and of how to use it effectively?
3. What evidence have we of teachers' current knowledge and practice about assessment?
4. How big is the gap between existing knowledge and practice and the desirable (according to the literature), and what problems are caused thereby?
5. What might be done to reduce the gap and what might be recommended for further research?

Since classroom assessment is a fundamental part of the teaching learning process, it was hoped that the findings of this study would contribute to a better understanding of the complexity of the classroom assessment phenomenon. It was also hoped that the results of this study might offer some recommendations to teachers, educational advisers, administrators, decision makers, and teacher trainers towards more effective teaching.

The term *classroom assessment* is used here to express all the processes for collecting information, making interpretations and decisions based on this information on a daily basis for the improvement of teaching and learning. It is a process that assists appropriate teaching decision making by providing information on two fundamental questions: How are we doing? and How can we do better? The fundamental role of classroom assessment is to provide authentic and meaningful feedback for improving learning and teaching practice.

To identify and support the various purposes associated with the study, the relevant literature about assessment has been discussed in chapters one to five. Chapter six examines the context of the Greek education system, its structure and operation, as well as the evolution of assessment in Greek primary schools. Methodological issues and their limitations are discussed in chapter seven. The findings of the questionnaire have been presented in chapter eight, and chapter nine presents classroom observations. Chapter ten presents assessment styles that were applied by some groups of teachers. Finally, chapter eleven discusses the importance of the results and their implications and makes suggestions for change deriving from the whole analysis of the present study.

The researcher's stance is essentially exploratory rather than verificatory. It is in that exploratory spirit that the following report of the data and their interpretations is made. Obviously, no legitimate attempt can be made from these data to make generalizations. Nevertheless, they may be suggestive of trends and approaches that could lend themselves to a more systematic plan and a more precise definition of variables in the future.

Before delving into the details of the study it is necessary to review the pertinent background information, since such information will aid in placing this thesis in its proper and wider context.

PART I: THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND

CHAPTER 1: CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT PURPOSES

Introduction

How important is assessment in the classroom?

This is a major question and is examined in the light of the research evidence concerning the intended and unintended purposes that assessment serves in the classroom.

Classroom assessment is a process of a formative nature aiming to assist teaching/learning. Teachers were always involved in diagnostic and formative assessment. This is mainly pursued through the realisation of purposes such as diagnosis, provision of feedback, mastery, remediation, motivation, communication, etc. This section reviews evidence on the formative function of classroom assessment; the purposes it serves to assist learning; undesirable side-effects, when assessment is not used properly; and teachers' awareness of its potential. The section intends:

- to enrich the reader's understanding about the variety of classroom assessment purposes and unintended side- effects
- to point out the importance of classroom assessment and the necessity for teachers to be clearly aware of the purpose they pursue each time
- to aid the interpretation of the study's findings.

Airasian's (1991) definition of assessment seems to be the most suitable for this study:

> The process of collecting, interpreting, and synthesizing information to aid in decision making is called *assessment* (Airasian, 1991, p.3).

1.1. Wider educational assessment purposes

Since the main interest of this study is classroom assessment and the purposes it serves this section very briefly refers to the wider purposes of assessment.

A reading of the extensive literature reveals the variety and the complexity of the aims served by assessment. Among others it aims to assess students' progress; to maintain educational standards; to offer certification; to provide feedback to teachers and students; to select students; to evaluate teachers, schools, material and teaching methods; to control; to evaluate curricula and the effectiveness of the whole education system.

Several studies (Broadfoot, & Osborn, 1987; Satterly, 1989; Lee, 1989; Broadfoot, Abbott, Croll, Osborn, Pollard, & Towler, 1991) point out that assessment affects teaching/learning by aiding curriculum, communication and accountability. Broadfoot (1987) writes that it aims to aid three parties:

> *Pupils*: diagnosis of progress, strengths and weaknesses guidance- curricular and vocational motivation- from a sense of achievement. *Teachers*: decisions about what needs to be taught; feedback on how effective teaching has been; feedback on class performance in comparison with other teachers and schools. *Consumers*: fair selection and allocation of opportunity (the meritocracy); feedback about the quality of a particular institution; monitoring of national standards; curriculum standardisation and control (p.5).

McArdle (1989) argues that prediction, selection and grading are the general purposes of assessment at school, though particular purposes are more applicable to some situations and types of schools than others. Assessment produces certificates of competence at a particular level or a particular area. These certificates on the other hand 'open the doors' for placement in subsequent levels, careers etc., (Broadfoot, 1979, 1984; Satterly, 1989). The selective function of assessment, manifesting itself as a social phenomenon has also been widely investigated

(Broadfoot, 1984; Sutton, 1985; Rowntree, 1991; Gipps, 1991; Mavrogiorgos, 1992; Chiotakis, 1993).

Assessment aimed at allocating students to different levels of schooling is an issue with a very long history in Greece and everywhere. Recent discussions can be found in (Satterly, 1989; Lee, 1989; Airasian 1991; Dimitropoulos 1989; Mavrogiorgos, 1992).

Assessment is often used to exert control on those who are assessed, either overtly or covertly. The social dimension of the issue is obvious and has been revealed by studies such as (Broadfoot, 1979, 1984, 1990; Gipps, 1991; Mavrogiorgos, 1992). Broadfoot (1990), puts it uncompromisingly:

> It provides a vehicle for control-control of individual aspirations and frustration through the legitimation of apparently objective educational judgements and control of the message producing system itself through the broader control functions embodied in procedures for teacher institutional assessment and accountability (p.199).

Harlen (1990) shows the evaluative function of assessment when information about the performance of groups of children is used in making judgements about educational provision at the class, school, authority or national level.

Policy makers are greatly interested in whether standards are being maintained, improved or in decline; whether they are implemented in the same way nationally and are comparable across examination boards (Brown, 1991; Sutton, 1985; Satterly, 1989; Rowntree, 1991). The performance of pupils may be compared with that of other members of their class, or school of the same year-level nationally (Gipps, 1990). Since this is based on standards (criteria) for the achievement of the learning objectives it helps in maintaining those standards (Jones & Bray, 1986).

The accountability function of assessment is based on the assumption that an educational institution must increasingly be able to demonstrate to both itself and to the world outside that it is fulfilling the aims that it has set for itself and the ones expected of it by society in general (Broadfoot & Osborn, 1987).

Often assessment drives instruction, and it is not always easy to avoid this when in particular teachers are anxious about their accountability for the results pupils produce (Sutton, 1991). Extensive research deals with the issue of public accountability and assessment (Broadfoot 1979, 1987a, 1990; Satterly, 1989; Dimitropoulos, 1989; Cassotakis, 1981; Sutton, 1985; Filer, 1993).

Although assessment in the classroom serves some of the wider purposes which are mentioned in the foregoing section, what follows examines in more detail those purposes that intend to assist teaching and learning, the main interest of this study.

1.2. CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT

The term classroom assessment is used here to express all the processes for collecting information, making interpretations and decisions based on this information on a daily basis in the classroom for the improvement of teaching and learning.

It is obvious that the wider aim of classroom assessment is to *form*, i.e. to change teaching and learning in a positive way. It is worth exploring this formative function, which provides the actual context of classroom assessment.

1.2.1. Classroom assessment's formative function

Reflections on the negative impacts of traditional examinations have led to developments that have tried to pin-point those features of the assessment process which might have a positive impact on learning, particularly focusing on the

provision of short-term goals and feedback on progress to pupils (Murphy & Torrance, 1988). The potentionally positive benefits of this sort of assessment are stressed in the report of the Task Group on Assessment and Testing (DES, 1987):

> Promoting children's learning is a principal aim of schools. Assessment lies at the heart of this process...it should be an integral part of the educational process, continually providing both 'feedback' and feedforward'. It therefore needs to be incorporated systematically into teaching practices at all levels (TGAT, 1987, paras 3-4).

Classroom assessment has been increasingly assumed to be synonymous with teacher assessment. Assessment approaches where the emphasis is on using assessment as a means to encourage learning are generally termed *formative*. Assessment can only be formative when it is part of a process in which there is opportunity for response to it (Broadfoot, 1987). The author enlarges on assessment techniques which are more likely to encourage formative assessment, namely: graded tests (Pennycuick & Murphy 1988; Gipps, 1990); graduated and staged assessments; negotiated assessments; student self-assessment and peer assessment. These approaches require the active collaborative involvement of pupils and have potential for formative impact. The difference between formative and summative assessment and the purposes each sort serves are very clearly stated by Broadfoot (1987):

> Formative assessment places the emphasis on continuous process of diagnosis, remediation, feedback, and mastery. Summative assessment refers to assessment at a particular point, curriculum stage or age, not necessarily to all pupils and the emphasis is on providing reliable and acceptable information on what has been achieved as the basis for choosing who should be allowed which opportunities where these must be rationed (p.6).

Sadler (1989) notes:

> Formative assessment is concerned with how judgements about the quality of student responses (performances, pieces of work) can be used to shape and improve the student's competence by short-circuiting the randomness and inefficiency of trial-and error learning (p.120).

and he goes on to underline the distinction from this of summative assessment which :

> is concerned with summing up or summarising the achievement status of a student, and is geared towards reporting at the end of a course of study especially for purposes of certification. It is essentially passive and does not normally have immediate impact on learning. The primary distinction between formative and summative assessment relates to purpose and effect, not to timing (p.120).

A vital difference between formative and summative assessment is that during the former the teacher can give feedback to students about how well they are doing. Summative assessment on the contrary, especially that of examinations, cannot provide immediate feedback because the results are known too late and information is not available to the students about the strengths or weaknesses of their work.

A formative emphasis may suggest a need for frequent and regular assessments on each topic as it is completed, rather than one comprehensive assessment at the end of the term or year, so that processes as well as outcomes may be observed and evaluated (Lee, 1989).

As with the process-product, distinction there is no clear difference between formative and summative assessment. But in distinguishing process-product and formative-summative assessments there is an important conclusion (Shipman, 1983). Assessing when a section of work is over, cannot help pupil or teacher to do things better at the time. It is often necessary to produce evidence on what has been achieved. But it is always necessary to feed information back to children as they learn, to adapt teaching methods, and to develop curricula as circumstances change.

Assessment is usually approached as an attempt to quantify outputs, to measure the measurable. The output is prespecified, and success or failure is gauged according

to whether the targets have been attained. But in primary schooling in particular there is an alternative view of learning which stresses the intrinsic value of activities, the personal growth that occurs, and the role of the children in determining the direction of events (Shipman, 1983). Learning is not programmed in advance, but is open-ended. Assessment cannot be planned to gauge predictable outcomes.

> The most important consequence of placing the formative assessment in the learning process is to shorten the time between learning and the feedback of information about performance. Most assessment is terminal, and takes place so long after the learning that it cannot provide information to help teacher or child on the next step, nor motivate either (Shipman, 1983, p.17).

Black (1986) examines the evolution of formative assessment from the mid sixties in British schools. He remarks that although during this time education had moved towards 'progressive' notion of continuous assessment this in fact meant continual examination for reporting.

Because of this, as Black and Dockrell (1980) report, in most of the cases where they saw continuous assessment taking place, feedback was in the form of a general attainment grade giving no real information about specific strengths and weaknesses.

According to Lee (1989) classroom assessment tends to be seen by teachers as having a more formative function, with the emphasis on monitoring students' progress, as individuals and as groups; it can be linked more closely with the particular topics and skills which students are working on; it can provide more immediate feedback to teachers, enabling them to monitor students' strengths and weaknesses and plan further work.

Harlen et al. (1992) report that teachers who successfully use formative assessment are looking out for progress towards intermediate goals and are aware of underlying ideas and skills which are required for success. They bring together several observations of the pupil's performance and find patterns which help them to uncover shaky foundations for exploring understandings which involve the pupil and avoid discouragement.

Lincoln and Guba (1981) have suggested that formative assessment is concerned with 'refinement and improvement'. This is clarified by Qualter (1988) who views formative assessment as a procedure which provides information on achievements of individual pupils that will assist in the planning of the pupils' future work. It requires the use of as wide a range of assessment practices as possible. The basis for the development of such tasks is the description of clearly defined attainment targets. Formative assessment has typical features such as the emphasis on the positive, focusing upon what the children are able to do, what they know or understand. It provides the teacher with information which influences future learning and provides real feedback to the pupils. It often involves the children in discussion about their experience and understanding, and contributes to their taking more responsibility for their own learning (Conner, Ponting, Evans, & Beynon, 1991).

1.2.2. Formative assessment: theoretical background

As Torrance (1993) points out formative assessment derives from either a 'behaviourist' or a 'constructivist' perspective, which are very different in their views of how learning takes place, but which could involve superficially similar practices and procedures.

In the mastery learning approach (Carroll, 1963; Bloom, 1974, 1976; Popham, 1978, 1987) formative assessment could be described as an essentially behaviourist

activity. Predetermined goals and teaching towards them rather specifically, making sure that teachers and pupils alike know what behaviour is required of them, i.e. what counts as achieving the objective. The 'graded assessment' model seems to be based on such a theoretical perspective, namely, short-term goals, clear assessment objectives, and detailed feedback to students on what they have or have not achieved and what they must do to improve next time (Pennycuick and Murphy, 1988; Gipps, 1990). However, such an approach has been criticised as too mechanistic (Torrance, 1993), and of specifying of the criteria in too much detail (Brown, 1988; 1991).

The other theoretical view derives from the social constructivist perspective in cognitive psychology. Here the teacher-pupil interaction goes beyond the provision of test results and the provision of additional instruction to include a role for the teacher in assisting the pupil to comprehend and engage with new ideas and problems (Torrance, 1993). What is important to identify is not just what children have achieved but what they might achieve, what they are now ready to achieve with the help of an adult (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Hence, learning should be 'scaffolded' (Bruner, 1985) by students being set appropriate tasks and being provided with appropriate support, with the purpose and focus of assessment being to indicate what is that students could achieve next. This approach looks forward rather than backwards and conceives teacher-student interaction as part of the assessment process itself. One of the implications of such an approach would be "that the teacher/tester and student collaborate actively to produce a best performance" (Wood, 1987, p. 242).

Recent developments of teacher assessment in infant classes in England and Wales indicate that it tends to become over-formalised because of misunderstandings over its nature and purpose. Such a trend means that teachers are assuming the task of 'formative' teacher assessment to be at best a rather mechanistic (HMI, 1992;

Torrance 1993) and behaviouristic one in the graded test tradition, at worst that they take the task of teacher assessment to be essentially summative.

1.3. CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT PURPOSES

Having examined the wider assessment purposes the discussion now focuses on the classroom to explore particular assessment purposes that assist teaching/learning.

Classroom assessment can be used in summative ways to record pupil attainment after courses of work have been completed. But it can also be used in more formative ways to provide support for pupils' learning (Pollard, Broadfoot, Croll, Osborn, & Abbott, 1994).

Glaser (1990) stresses that assessments serve different educational purposes. He suggests that it is necessary to consider what kind of information teachers and policy makers require and what the results of an assessment actually indicate. He wonders:

> Will the results be used for student diagnosis and point teachers to appropriate teaching tactics? Do we have student diagnosis and remedial action in mind, or do we require a general sampling of end-course achievement? (p. 480).

For recognizing assessment as essential to the educational process it is implied that the information gathered is usable, and is indeed used, in making day-to-day classroom decisions. These decisions may be about 'the appropriate next steps' or about 'appropriate remedial help and guidance' (DES/WO, 1988).

Bachor and Anderson (1994) report that teachers in British Columbia, Canada, consider that the main reasons for doing assessment are: to monitor students in relation to curricular location; to inform teaching; to inform parents, and to inform individual students of their position in relation to the goals of schooling. Teachers

had a major thrust to have students consciously aware of their own learning-to identify and articulate goals for their own learning, to devise ways of determining achievement, and to implement these plans. These teachers were moving towards student self-assessment.

1.3.1 Assessment for Diagnosis

Every day primary class teachers are likely to spend some time assessing children diagnostically, in order to gather information which will help them to understand a child's learning difficulties and this will most probably lead on to some form of remedial programme (Galton, Simon, & Croll, 1980; Satterly, 1981; Shipman, 1983; Glenis, 1989). Diagnostic assessment is often practised by teachers when they try to discover the improvement a child is making.

Within the curriculum, assessment has diagnostic function, because it informs the teacher about: what each child has learned; children's strengths and weaknesses; and how far teaching has attained its aims (Broadfoot & Osborn, 1987; Papanaum-Tzika, 1985; Further Education Unit, 1988). It also indicates needed changes, and reforms of curricula or, perhaps may even endorse the current ones.

Teachers everywhere typically try to diagnose not only children's learning, i.e. academic needs, but also social or emotional ones in the classroom (Broadfoot, 1979; Cassotakis, 1981; Dimitropoulos 1989; Satterly 1989; Wilson 1989; Thomas 1990). Further, teachers attempt to identify these needs, to understand their cause, to record their frequency and to decide remedial action (Airasian 1991).

Diagnostic tests enable teachers to gain detailed information on the particular points of difficulty for each pupil, information which is necessary if there is to be improvement of performance.In such tests the responses selected by pupils from a number of options can indicate that a certain concept or process has or has not been

grasped. The subsequent action is to select and offer alternative learning experiences to remedy the difficulties diagnosed (Dunning Committee on Assessment in Scotland HMSO, 1977). Black (1986) summarises several points which distinguished the Scottish Diagnostic Assessment model from the American mastery learning approach.

Diagnostic assessment is valuable for promoting teachers' success and preventing children's failure, according to Black and Docrell (1984), who described it as "a form of assessment designed primarily to help pupils learn and teachers to teach" (p. 12).

Gipps (1991) also highlights the significance of assessment in diagnosing children's strengths and weaknesses as well as a process of testing groups of children to identify individuals who are in need of special help, the so-called 'screening' process.

Shipman (1983) explains in a simple way the diagnostic and predictive role of assessment, when a teacher is wondering 'What do my pupils need to know and be able to do at the end of their course, that at present they don't know or cannot do?' The necessity for diagnosis of the individual's progress and needs, as well as of the curriculum and pedagogic concerns is also stressed by Black and Broadfoot (1982): "Diagnostic assessment can give the pupil information on the areas of his work he has or has not mastered" (p.11).

Diagnosis of students' competence at a particular level of their schooling and therefore the placement in the proper next level is another useful purpose of assessment (Dimitropoulos 1989). Black and Broadfoot (1982) underline the potential of diagnostic assessment by concluding:

> The overwhelming evidence is that to use diagnostic procedures over a period of time is likely to increase pupil attainment, develop motivation and consequently change pupil attitudes to school (p.65).

The French approach to using diagnostic assessment is interesting. Since 1989 all state and private schools students of France in the 3rd year of primary school and 1st year of college are subject to diagnostic assessment in French and maths in the second week of the school year in order to provide teachers as they begin work with their class with a detailed diagnostic picture of the strengths and weaknesses of individual children so that the teacher can respond differentially to each child's needs. The aim is to encourage a more individualised pedagogy and by so doing, to improve the overall level of student learning. It is interesting that the initiative involves as well the provision of training courses in the assessment run by national and local inspectors for teachers (Broadfoot, 1992).

Diagnostic assessment may not adequately identify the causes of failure or success (Satterly, 1981; Simpson, 1988; Brown, 1991), but it can alert teachers to children's strengths and weaknesses and enable teachers to bring their personal judgement to bear. Papas (1980) is also sceptical as far as the diagnostic and prognostic value of assessment is concerned and argues that it does not provide the real 'profile' of a student. He cites as examples several well known gifted personalities like Einstein, Beethoven, Darwin, Tolstoi, whose talents and potential strikingly failed to be recognised from assessments made during their schooling.

The above evidence of diagnostic assessment's function referred by and large to rather 'formal' approaches of collecting diagnostic information usually through paper and pencil techniques. However, much of this sort of assessment occurs in the classroom in informal ways, as the next section explains.

1.3.2. Informal Diagnostic assessment

It will most often manifest itself in the daily operation of a classroom. As Deno (1972) put it: "To teach is to be judging every moment of every interaction with the child" (p.362). Frith and Macintosh (1984) remark that specific action may be taken as a result of such diagnosis and it is more than likely that any such remedial activity will be quick. This is an important distinction between informal and formal diagnostic assessment since the latter provides less opportunities to the teacher for a fast response. Black and Broadfoot (1982) note:

> ...it is basically the approach followed by the 'good' teacher as she walks around the room discussing points of difficulty with individual pupils (p.2).

and they stress the significance of the approach:

> It can give the pupil information on the areas of his work he has not mastered. It provides the teacher with the feedback on which to base the most appropriate learning activity (p.12).

The ORACLE research has concentrated on one sort of informal diagnostic assessment that is realised through questioning. Marking of books can be also considered as a sort of informal diagnostic assessment. Child observation is another assessment approach frequently used by teachers in classrooms to ascertain a pupil's state of knowledge or success in a particular matter. McArdle (1989) remarks that as package of assessment methods, questioning, marking and observation, can provide some information for many general problems which may arise in the classroom. They can, for instance, reveal a child who has not understood instructions, the child who cannot use a dictionary, or has difficulty with subtraction or mistakes b's for d's. Such insights are invaluable to the teacher but in many cases they will not lead to immediate remediation and further investigation may be necessary to discover the exact nature of difficulty.

As Ingenkamp (1977) points out, a greater awareness of the problems and potential of individual students is recognised in a growing concern to develop more informal diagnostic assessment procedures which can identify the progress of both the individual and the class as whole and sources of difficulty.

It seems from the above that informal assessment is always there, and it is likely to be implemented at random or in ad hoc ways i.e. not in the most efficient manner. Although informal assessment is widely used little attention has been paid to this mode of assessment.

> Yet despite its clear potential, it is only recently that a start has been made to provide resources which will help teachers to apply it more systematically in the normal classroom (Black and Broadfoot 1982, p.12).

One possible reason for the seeming lack of attention given by research to the issue of informal diagnostic assessment is the difficulty in obtaining accurate and meaningful information on how the process operates (McArdle, 1989).

A consequent purpose to diagnosis is to feedback information first to the children as far as their specific strengths and weaknesses is concerned, as well as to the teachers about the effectiveness of their teaching. The nature, and the significance of feedback, which is very important purpose of classroom assessment, are examined in detail in chapter 5.

1.3.3. Learning Motivation

Many studies identify motivation for learning, as a significant function of classroom assessment (Rowntree, 1991; Fragos, 1977; Broadfoot 1979, 1984; Harris, and Bell, 1986; Jones & Bray, 1986; Crooks, 1988; Satterly, 1989; Dimitropoulos, 1989; Gipps, 1990; Airasian, 1991).

Some of the various aspects and practices of assessment in the classroom that increase or decrease learning motivation are examined in this section. Dimitropoulos (1989) asserts that assessment acts first as a motivation for a 'kindly competition', something he says, that exists in all societies, and second as motivation for studying, that is a benefit for students.

Learning objectives must be realistic to motivate learning, so that the children feel that they have chances to achieve them (Broadfoot, 1979; Airasian, 1991). An awareness by the pupils that their opinions are being taken into account should enhance the morale, involvement and thus their motivation as well (Broadfoot, 1979). If pupils can be encouraged to think positively about their learning and to see their progress in relation to their own previous achievement rather than merely in relation to that of others, they may come to have a better self-concept since that progress can be recognised by both pupil and teacher (Ames, 1984; Crooks, 1988). Such reinforcement of success rather than failure should lead to increased motivation (Broadfoot, 1979; Crooks, 1988). Grades (chapter 5) could motivate some pupils to study (Tsiboukis, 1979; Avdali, 1989).

In order to enhance students' self-concept and learning motivation, the 'Records of Achievements' (RoA) schemes were introduced in England and Wales (Broadfoot, 1979; 1987a; Gipps, 1990). Another approach is known as 'graded' assessments (Gipps, 1990). However, such practices were not applied in Greece.

There is evidence that the ways pupils respond to educational experiences and tasks are complicated functions of their abilities and personalities, their previous educational experiences, their current attitudes, self-perceptions and motivational dispositions, together with the nature of the current experiences and tasks (Paris & Cross, 1983; Howe, 1987; Paris, 1988; Crooks, 1988).

Research stresses the significance of pupil self-perceptions in determining the ways they respond to educational and assessment tasks (Dweck & Elliott, 1983; Eccles, 1983; Nicholls, 1984; Weiner, 1986). These authors point out, that the reasons (attributions) pupils give for their success or failure, or their perceptions of *self-efficacy* i.e. capability to perform well (Bandura, 1977, 1982), are extremely important factors influencing their achievements and performance. Perceptions of self-efficacy appear to have a strong influence on effort and persistence with difficult tasks, or after experiences of failure (Bandura, 1982; Schunk, 1984, 1985).

Repeated success on tasks fosters self-efficacy, but repeated failure diminishes it (Crooks, 1988). Performance feedback fosters self-efficacy when informing pupils about their progress in mastery, rather than on social comparison (Schunk, 1984, 1985). This is crucial for the less able pupils, who might otherwise receive little positive feedback. Self-efficacy is best enhanced if longer term aims are attained by a sequenced series of objectives with clear criteria that pupils find attainable (Bandura and Schunk, 1981). Mastery learning approaches serve these conditions when they are well implemented (Driscoll, 1986).

1.3.4. Intrinsic, continuing and extrinsic motivation

These concepts are closely related to *interest* in the material that is been studied. Research on intrinsic and continuing motivation has been reviewed by Corno & Mandinach (1983); Corno & Rohrkemper (1985); deCharms (1976); Deci (1975); Deci & Ryan (1985); Harter (1985); Maehr (1976) and McCombs (1984), among others. According to these studies, allowing a degree of pupil autonomy in choice of learning activities and objectives is a key element in fostering intrinsic motivation. Self-regulated learning experiences foster intrinsic motivation, which encourages pupils to be more independent as learners (Crooks, 1988).

The important role of the children in their own assessment is underlined by Hewett and Benett (1989) who argue that it is as pupils take responsibility for their own learning (Broadfooot, 1987) understanding what is required of them, setting their own realistic goals, and evaluating their performance in the light of them. That way intrinsic motivation and learning ownership are improved.

The use of *extrinsic* motivation is questionable. Lepper, Greene, and Nisbett (1973), found that students who had previously chosen to engage in an activity voluntarily, with apparent enjoyment, were less willing to return to that activity after they had received a reward from a teacher for engaging in the activity.

Pupils' self-perceptions of the factors influencing success or failure in learning tasks have a very significant influence on their motivation and behaviour. Such attributions for success or failure are central to Weiner's theory of achievement motivation (Weiner, 1979, 1985, 1986).

Weiner (1979) pointed out that success or failure could be attributed to four possible causes: ability, effort, luck, or task difficulty.

Overall, the above evidence seems to have clear implications for classroom teaching and assessment. These include challenging but attainable tasks, some individualization of tasks, use of tasks that are more intrinsically motivating, opportunities for pupil autonomy in learning, use of mixed ability groups, provision of unambiguous performance feedback that stresses mastery and progress, and little emphasis on summative grading (Covington, 1985; Maehr, 1983; Nicholls, 1984; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1984; Crooks, 1988).

In the light of the above, educators developed teaching and assessing approaches aiming to foster children's motivation by focusing on the individual child, the so called *differentiation.*

1.4 Differentiation

Shorrocks et al. (1993) examine the *differentiation*-the fact that different children have different learning needs- and the *match*- the appropriateness of tasks to the learning needs. This approach intends, by addressing papers and questions at different levels of difficulty, to allow all pupils to show what they know, understand and can do (Ames, 1984; DES, 1985; Gipps, 1990). However, Bennett, Desforges, Cockburn, & Wilkinson, (1984) report that these two aims frequently were not met in English primary classes of six and seven-year-olds, they studied:

- more than half the tasks allocated to children were mismatched to their capabilities;
- the capabilities of high attainers were frequently underestimated and those of low attainers overestimated;
- the majority of tasks, especially in number work, were practice tasks, rather than tasks which required children to restructure and understand, or enrich and extend.

An important issue in the development of standardized tasks for the assessment of the National Curriculum in England and Wales has been the suggestion that they should be differentiated. This has been interpreted in two different ways by the groups who were developing the tasks (Conner et al., 1991). One group has opted to differentiate by task: i.e. teachers will make the decision as to which tasks are most suitable for individual children, and offer a level-1 task to a level-1 child, level-2 task to a level-2 child, etc. The alternative option to this view of differentiation is to differentiate by outcome. This implies that teachers will be required to decide, on the basis of provided criteria, the level of performance of the children at the end of each task. The children will engage in the same task, but the task will be organized so that a range of responses is possible (Conner et al., 1991).

Some researchers who have developed individualized systems for learning have claimed that an education which is truly oriented towards individual differences is one in which most children could master almost all the basic objectives in schooling if given time to do so (Bloom, 1976; Fragos, 1977; Child, 1981; Satterly, 1989).

1.5 Motivation as a social outcome

From a social point of view, Pollard (1990) notes that motivation in the classroom is not simply to do with 'stimulating the children's interests', for such a strategy is totally decontextualised. It is also about establishing a social atmosphere in which pupils know that their efforts will be valued and judged fairly. Moreover, it concerns setting tasks and providing activities which relate positively to children's social relationships, their expectations and their cultural understandings (Mavrogiorgos, 1988; Filer, 1993) about work tasks. If this is not done the work given is likely to be regarded as 'unfair' and the children's motivation will be reduced. A task should thus be socially as well as cognitively appropriate (Pollard, 1990).

One of the alternative approaches developed to foster learning motivation by the aid of classroom assessment, which interests the present study, is 'mastery learning'.

1.6. Mastery learning. Assessing for competence

The concept of mastery learning was first elaborated by Carroll (1963) and its effectiveness discussed by Bloom (1976) who summarizes the 'mastery learning' approach by claiming that 'what any person in the world can learn, almost all persons can learn if provided with appropriate prior and current conditions of learning'. The essential characteristics of mastery learning are that the appropriate method of presentation has to be carefully worked out to meet the abilities and needs of a child; as much time as is necessary must be provided for the child to

achieve a predetermined level of mastery. Several studies deal with mastery learning (Bloom, 1976; Child, 1977; Harris & Bell, 1986; Broadfoot, 1982; Black, 1986; Satterly, 1989).

1.7. Assessment for communication

With regard to communication assessment has a certification function which informs the children of the level of their achievements in a range of activities (Broadfoot, 1987). Reports can encourage learning if they provide clear information about the strengths or weaknesses of the child's performance, or work, accompanied with a positive comment especially for younger pupils (Stewart & White, 1976; Cassotakis, 1981).

Summative assessment results are usually passed on to other teachers when they take on new students or when students move from one school to another. These reports are helpful to the new teacher, to allocate children at levels, to arrange his/her teaching, to construct different difficulty tasks according to the children's report information (Cassotakis, 1981; Dimitropoulos, 1989).

Parents have also a right to know what goes on in the schools their children attend (accountability). The content of children's reports is mainly academic, but sometimes, particularly in primary school, it also includes non academic information (Broadfoot, 1986) for instance, on children's effort, (Paraskeuopoulos, 1989; Mavrogiorgos, 1993), behaviour, participation, cooperation and interest in class (Rowntree, 1991; Airasian, 1991).

Another underlying purpose of classroom assessment refers on the one hand, to the control that teachers attempt to exert on their pupils, and on the other to the control which policy makers exert on teachers (through curricula, manuals, directives, and formal assessment procedures).

1.8 Control

Classrooms are complex social settings where people interact with one another in a multitude of ways. An often overlooked implicit purpose of classroom assessment is to establish and maintain the social balance of the classroom. For classrooms to become positive social and learning environments, order, discipline, and cooperation must be present (Kyriacou, 1986; Airasian, 1991).

Teachers are not only concerned about academic progress, they may also be even more concerned about behaviour and attitudes since establishing control is a necessary precondition for teaching (Broadfoot, 1979; Fontana, 1986; Dimitropoulos, 1989).

Findings of the present study (chapters 8, 9) reflect the absolute control that typically the Greek primary teachers were attempting to exert on children's learning and behaviour in the classroom.

Broadfoot et al. (1993) report the different degree of control that English and French teachers felt due to the very different education systems. They found that the French teachers felt much more accountable towards the Ministry of education whilst their English colleagues felt accountable mainly to parents.

The control which the highly centralised Greek education system imposes on teachers is examined in chapter 6, and the research findings reveal its implications for teaching and learning (chapters 8, 9, 10).

1.9. Undesirable side effects of assessment

The foregoing evidence clearly showed the potential of classroom assessment to fulfil purposes that can maximally assist teaching/learning if it is used properly.

However, it doesn't always fulfil them; instead it sometimes inhibits teaching/learning. The following section examines such undesirable side-effects of classroom assessment that might be due to teachers' ignorance of the potential of assessment and alternative approaches, or because they use it for wrong reasons, or because of other constraints, such as lack of time, workload, size or quality of class, lack of assessment training etc.

Not surprisingly this situation causes problems for teaching/learning such as diminishing children's motivation for schooling, causing disappointment to the less able pupils; disruption, deterioration of child/teacher relationships; misunderstanding between teachers and pupils/parents.

One of the primary aims of this study is to reveal the undesirable side-effects that assessment can have to potential teachers-readers so that they could avoid them in future.

(Gipps, 1992) argues that the model on which the National Assessment structure in England and Wales is based is in tension. Most significantly, she said, the same assessment cannot be used for formative and evaluative purposes since these require different timing, different involvement of the teacher, and different use of results.

Several studies note the conflict between the roles of teacher and assessor. Assessment tends to harm the relationship between teacher and students when the teacher undertakes that role (Gronlund, 1978; Markadonis and Cassotakis 1979; Bouzakis, 1989; Harlen & Qualter 1991).

There is evidence that sometimes assessments have negative affective impacts on students. Ebel (1979) points out that often marks are used as a means of reward, or

sanctions, so that some times marking becomes a vehicle of unjustice instead of fairness. Papas (1980) emphasises the baneful effects on students' psychological development and refers to arguments between Greek students and their parents about marks, and even cites cases of students suffering personality disorganisation and resorting to cheating. Glaser (1971) writes that where there is assessment there is failure as well, that means disappointment, and frustration. The negative effects of assessment include increasing anxiety and decreasing the desire to continue studying (Harris & Bell 1986; Cassotakis, 1981; Papas, 1980). Howe (1987) identifies several factors that inhibit learning motivation:

> ...fear of failure, feelings of helplessness, lack of confidence, and having the experience that one's fate is largely controlled by external factors rather than by oneself, almost certainly have effects that restrict a person's learned achievements (p. 142).

In every classroom there are pupils who by comparing their performance with other pupils realise that they are not likely to be successful in terms of external examination performance, hence a major source of motivation is ineffective. As Broadfoot (1979) points out the source of the problem lies in the fundamental alienation of 'low-achievers' from a classroom experience which provides them only with a continually reinforced feeling of failure. Involving both students and teachers in assessment can help to overcome these alienative influences. Such mutual evaluation recognises the dual responsibility of both teacher and student in the learning process.

Gipps et al. (1992) report that during the assessment of SATs in England and Wales, assessment stress and tiredness were widespread though the level differed from school to school.

Continuous assessment was introduced partly because of complaints that it was unfair and unnecessarily stressful to students to know that they were being

examined on only one single occasion or over a short period of time where luck with the questions played a particularly significant part in their chances to success (Miller, 1976).

All assessment practice is potentially capable of raising levels of anxiety (Fragos, 1977; Satterly, 1989), however, this is not necessarily a bad thing (Child, 1986), but it depends upon the level of difficulty of the task being assessed for the learner.

When students know they are being assessed they may change their behaviour. They may make assumptions about why they are being assessed and what their teachers expect. They can then either ignore, reinforce or contest their teachers' expectations and conclusions. Sometimes students may perform poorly not because they cannot do well but because they do not care to (Rowntree, 1991). Moreover, when students know their teachers' opinion of them, it fosters that most potent side-effect of assessment - the 'self-fulfilling prophecy' (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968; Insel and Jacobson 1975). Rowntree (1991) explains how this might be applied in the classroom in terms of mutual conditioning and reinforcement:

> If a teacher has made an overall negative assessment of a particular student, for example, he may be less likely to ask him to contribute in a class discussion and may be less patient and supportive if he does try to contribute; being unrewarded, the student may then be even less likely to volunteer an opinion on another occasion; the teacher too may be even less likely to call for a contribution (p.43).

Another side-effect of assessment relates to extrinsic rewards. Pupils often attempt to meet the teachers' criteria rather than their own satisfaction. They may want to please the teachers or to win some prize or privilege to which they hold the keys. In other cases pupils may regard the approval of the teachers for their efforts to be expressed in gold stars, marks, scores, grades, positions in class, passes, credits, certificates, and so on (Child, 1986; Cassotakis, 1981; Rowntree, 1991).

Crooks, (1988) points out that pupils competing with others over the extrinsic spoils of learning causes undesirable side-effects. Another, situation which usually arises early in children's schooling, before the extrinsic rewards have become so tangible and external, is their teachers' public comparison of one student with another. From their early days at school children are made aware of individual differences among their peers. For a few to emerge as outstandingly successful the majority must fail to varying degrees. Competitive assessment often leads students who have failed on a few tasks to feel that they have failed as a person. As a 'failure' themselves they may then become less capable of succeeding in subsequent tasks (Shipman, 1983; Satterly, 1989; Brown, 1991; Airasian, 1991).

Teachers, to a varying extent, make informal assessments of children based on dispositional qualities such as behaviour or work habits, as well as cognitive qualities, and these have been shown to influence teacher decisions on grouping and lessons content (Jackson, 1964; Rist, 1970; Nash, 1976; Keddie, 1971; Airasian, 1991).

The prejudicial aspects of assessment are revealed by several studies (Rowntree, 1977; Broadfoot, 1979; Airasian, 1991) who point out that often teachers are in danger of applying unfair assessments on their pupils even before they meet them, by predicting their capabilities based on the evidence they have gathered from other children of the same age whom they have been taught in previous years. Sometimes teachers label children as 'bright' or 'dull' which become stereotypes and lead children to behave in accordance with these labels (Broadfoot, 1979; Airasian, 1991; Shipman, 1983; Shorrocks et al., 1993). This in turn often makes teachers underestimate those children's achievements.

> Some teachers seem unable to respond to success when they are expecting failure (Brophy and Good 1974, p.312).

Teachers' assessments and achievement expectations may also be influenced by factors like children's achievements in other fields, race, or socioeconomic background. Teachers are influenced by the so-called 'halo-effect'. During assessment children are also influenced by the social relationship between them and the assessor (Roth 1974; Rowntree 1977).

One could include in these 'social' side-effects of assessment the so-called 'bureaucratic' aspects (Rowntree, 1991). As he notes, the unintended effects of this nature refer to an excess of paper and pencil procedures, and the lack of a personal relationship between assessor and assessed, and to the inability of tests to reveal students' personal qualities and interests.

Not all assessment purposes are compatible. Evidence from experience in the USA (Airasian, 1991; Stiggins, 1985) combined with that of England and Wales, (Broadfoot et al., 1991; Gipps, 1992; Pollard et al., 1994) indicates that information collected for the purposes of supporting learning is unsuitable and unreliable if summarized and used for making judgements about schools, and its use for this aim severely impairs its formative role (Broadfoot, 1992).

> The detailed, frequent, positive and idiosyncratic feedback associated with good formative assessment would be inappropriate as the basis either for institutional monitoring or summative certification (Broadfoot, 1992, p.323).

Overall, it seems that the majority of the writers who oppose student assessment dispute its summative function.

1.10. Teachers' awareness of assessment's potential

Bearing in mind the evidence concerning the way in which classroom assessment practices work for good or ill in facilitating learning, it becomes interesting to ask

how far teachers are aware of assessment function and potential, and how far they are able to use it effectively to improve their teaching skills and pupils' learning.

Research stresses that teachers have to be clear about why they are assessing and then to find the most appropriate techniques or styles to fulfil that purpose (Rowntree, 1977; Frith & Macintosh, 1984; Lee 1989; Satterly, 1989).

However, often classroom assessment is intuitive, and the teacher is unaware that it is taking place (Harlen & Qualter, 1991). Papas (1980) reports that so far Greek teachers have not been properly trained as assessors and so operate in rather an intuitive way. Bottin (1991) reports similar findings from France. This is one important reason for the lack of a structured implementation of assessment techniques in most primary classrooms (Rowntree, 1977; Threadfold, 1980; Broadfoot et al., 1991; Airasian, 1991).

A major role identified for classroom assessment is that of monitoring learning and informing teaching decisions on a day-to-day basis. In this role, assessment is an integral part of the interactions between teacher, pupil and learning materials. Because of this relationship, (Harlen and Qualter, 1991) found that some teachers who practise formative assessment well, may not recognize that what they are doing includes assessing; they feel they need to add a special task as a formal check. This partly may be due to holding an image of assessment as a more formal activity, distinct from teaching.

Considering the above, a crucial question emerges: How do teachers develop an awareness of tacit forms of assessment and enhance their effectiveness in the classroom?

Broadfoot et al. (1991) however report that there was some evidence at the beginning of their project in 1990 of teachers in England and Wales successfully using assessment to support learning according to the diagnostic and formative purposes of the Government's Task Group on Assessment and Testing Report (DES, 1988). Perhaps teachers started accumulating experience by assessing the National Curriculum, and through some in-service training are becoming more confident and skilled in assessment, and more flexible in their approach, integrating teaching and assessment (Pollard et al., 1994).

Another question emerging from this section is why teachers in most countries, (Papas, 1980, Bottin, 1991; Harlen & Qualter, 1991) are typically not professionally expert (i.e. not trained) in assessment in the sense of understanding how it can most effectively be used and the techniques available.

Several factors may be responsible for this. One is the inadequacy of training in assessment (Noll, 1955; Mayo, 1967, 1970; Ward 1980; Newman and Stallings, 1982; Flemming and Chambers, 1983). Another is that teachers focus on teaching activities rather than assessment (Airasian, 1991). They mostly see assessment clearly in its summative sense for selection, certification and accountability. Moreover, teachers may 'resist' overt assessment because they want to 'protect' their pupils (Harlen & Qualter, 1991; Pollard et al., 1994) from anxiety, discrimination, failure and similar undesirable assessment side-effects. It may be due to lack of an explicit language of objectives (Pollard et al., 1994). Another reason could be teachers' assumption that assessment is the job of others, (officials, LEA, policy makers). All these questions could be interesting topics for future research.

1.11. Towards an alternative assessment perspective

Researchers developed various approaches to improve assessment's effectiveness. Broadfoot (1986) points out the undesirable effects of examinations and presents alternative patterns. Overall, these patterns have as the principal concern the 'humanizing' of the assessment procedure; they envisage the abolition of pass/fail and the fear of failure in favour of grades; the replacement of one-off examinations by continuous teacher assessment, the extension of the scope of the assessment to include not only formal written work but oral and practical work also, and in some cases, personal qualities. Accordingly, assessment would become diagnostic and detailed, increasingly cumulative and integrated with the learning process and only culminating in, not solely orientated to, a terminal evaluation. An alternative model in this perspective referred as *Graded assessment* (Pennycuick and Murphy, 1988; Gipps, 1990).

Doubts concerning the effectiveness of classroom assessment led educators in England and Wales to search for a systematic, cumulative record of performance. This was to be based on meaningful tasks which the teacher would set systematically in cooperation with the student (Broadfoot, 1977; 1987a; Radnor, 1988; McLean, 1990). These are the well known 'profiles' or 'Records of Achievements' (RoAs) which provide evidence of a student's work/achievements, accumulating them in a file. Various models of RoAs were developed based on similar principles.

Three issues are associated with the implementation of RoAs, (Broadfoot, Abbott, Croll, Osborn, and Pollard, 1990; HMI, 1990): Greater emphasis on personal and social development; the individualisation of records to include personalised notes

about each student which can give the basis for a review; and an emphasis on involving parents in teaching and assessment.

It is believed that RoAs motivate students because they include experiences and achievements beyond the academic, thus enhancing the feeling of success experienced by less academic students; increasing students' self-awareness and independence by involving them in recording their own achievements; negotiating their assessments and future learning with teachers, subsequently encouraging them to feel that they have some control over their achievements and record (Broadfoot, 1987; Satterly, 1989; Freedman, 1991). Overall, within the RoAs process both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation are being addressed (Gibbs, 1990). However, profiles have been criticised (Broadfoot et al., 1990) as one of the many formalizations of an earlier informal process made necessary by the hyper-individualism of modern society that separates individuals from the roles they occupy.

The extensive literature and international developments in assessment techniques such as the growing dominance of criterion-referenced approaches, more authentic measures of achievement, and more democratic, participatory assessment practices appears to have convinced policy-makers for instance, in France (Broadfoot, 1992), in the U.K., the USA, (Stiggins, 1985; Airasian, 1991), and Canada (Bachor & Anderson, 1994), of the potentially key role that assessment can play as part of the teaching-learning process itself.

1.12. Overview

This chapter reviewed evidence on several assessment purposes that are closely related to the main interest of this study, i.e. classroom assessment's potential to assist teaching and learning. First, a brief reference to the wider assessment purposes was made, that is: to evaluate students, teachers, curricula and resources;

to select, provide certificates; predict, control, maintain standards, to give grades, to communicate, and to serve accountability.

Second, the basic purposes that assessment aims in the classroom were explored. The formative nature of classroom assessment and its potential was discussed both, from the behaviourist and from the constructivist perspective.

Diagnosis of: children's strengths and weaknesses; how well they have attained the taught material; children's academic, social, and emotional needs; and of instruction's difficulties is reported as a fundamental purpose of classroom assessment as well. Diagnostic information on learning or teaching difficulties, can be used by teachers to: take remedial measures; provide alternative teaching; and to allocate pupils to a particular level.

Informal diagnostic assessment has similar purposes, but because it is unsystematic, based mainly on mental recording this approach has not been adequately investigated. Though diagnostic assessment seems to be very useful, however it does not provide information about the cause of the difficulties, nor it has predictive value.

Perhaps the most important purpose that classroom assessment has the potential to accomplish is the fostering of children's motivation. Encouragement of children's effort, achievable targets, positive comments, clear feedback, considering non-academic achievements, showing that children's work counts, and allowing some degree of autonomy in learning, are some of the ways of enhancing motivation. The intrinsic, and the continuous motivation are reported to be helpful, though the role of the extrinsic motivation is questionable. Moreover, motivation was

examined as a social outcome in the sense that it is strongly influenced by the learning context and children's socioeconomic background.

When the idea of differentiation is properly implemented it could profoundly assist children's learning. It was reported as differentiation by task, i.e. different tasks according to individual abilities, or by outcome, i.e. the same task for all but constructed in graded difficulty. A final purpose to mastery learning was also mentioned.

The importance of communication with the children, parents, teachers and other interested parties of the assessment results was pointed out as a crucial assessment purpose. The often overlooked purpose of control in the classroom also was considered.

The section on undesirable side-effects of assessment reveals how some assessments could result in demotivating, frustrating and disappointing the children. Some alternate assessment approaches were presented, such as RoAs.

Overall, this evidence confirms the complexity and the importance of assessment in the classroom, its potential to assist learning, and hence the necessity for teachers to be aware of this potential and the effective practices available. (These two latter issues are of major interest for the present study). However, there is evidence that typically in most countries teachers in infant and primary schools assess rather intuitively, amateurishly, unsystematically, often even unconsciously.

The general impression the researcher acquired from the reviewed evidence is that first, not all assessment purposes are compatible; and second that policy makers shift their efforts towards alternative perspective and approaches, aiming mainly to

assist teaching/learning. The trend is to 'humanise' the assessment (Broadfoot, 1986).

According to the reviewed evidence, in order to improve learning motivation classroom assessment approaches should involve differentiated tasks, clearly articulated criteria, challenging but attainable, self-referenced goals, frequent collection of information on pupils performance, assessments that will indicate children's effort and performance, and provide personal, encouraging, specific feedback. It seems that research on classroom assessment implementation will need to explicitly articulate which of the multiple purposes can be realized by which combinations of practices.

In order to provide evidence about current assessment practices (a key question of this study) the next chapter examines how assessment is actualised on a daily basis in the classroom.

CHAPTER 2: CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

Introduction

This chapter deals with classroom assessment in practice. It aims to point out how complex the assessment process is; to outline current practice, and difficulties of implementation; to assist the interpretation of the study's findings; and to aid interested parties to select the best option according to the purposes they seek.

For facilitating progress, assessment may be applied in various ways but a similar hierarchy of developmental phases is likely to exist within them all. Accordingly, there will be a reason for assessment to occur, a method of assessing the situation, and ways to improve the situation in the light of the newly discovered information (McArdle, 1989).

Assessing children's learning can take place in a variety of ways across a continuum from informal, spontaneous, almost 'chance' classroom observations, through to formal, highly structured, standardised testing (Shipman, 1983; Airasian, 1991; Mitchell & Koshy, 1993).

2.1. The complexity of classroom assessment

Assessment means many things to many people and this is nowhere more clear than in the literature concerning the subject. Jones and Bray (1986) write that "Assessment is an all-embracing term" and in much of the literature it is used as a terminological umbrella which can cover any number of events. Frith and Macintosh (1984) also acknowledge the range of meanings and possible placing of emphasis within the term "assessment", and write in the introduction of their book:

> Assessment is, of course, a very comprehensive term and the compilers of the guide are only too well aware that they have by no means covered every aspect of the subject (p.v).

According to (Stiggins, Conklin, & Bridgeford, 1986):

> Assessment is unquestionably one of teachers' most complex and important tasks. We begin to comprehend the complexity of classroom assessment as we explore the range of teachers' decisions and the plethora of student characteristics they must consider in making those decisions (p. 10).

Morrison (1974), points out the wide range of processes, events and skills that the study of assessment deals with, which on the surface seem so diverse as to have little in common. At the one extreme there are formal examinations with academic achievement as prime concern and at the other there are the on-going events of the classroom, intrinsic to teaching, typically oral, and concerned with scholastic, social and managerial issues.

In order to enrich the reader's understanding on the extent of the complexity of assessment procedures chapters two to five examine in more detail how it is realised in the classroom, its scope, its methods and its impacts on students and teachers.

2.2. Classroom assessment practices

The term classroom assessment, as applied here, covers four phases. During the first phase information is collected by the teacher. In the second phase this information is interpreted with reference to particular criteria, norm, attainments or performance, or previous attainments i.e. self-performance. In the third phase the teacher's response of acceptance or rejection in various forms and degrees is made, and, if unfavourable, is often followed by remedial action. The final phase concerns the implications of teacher's response on the child. These procedures are usually supplemented by processes of recording and reporting assessment results.

2.3. First Phase: Evidence collection

This phase refers to the various means of information-gathering, and the difficulties commonly encountered. The approaches that are employed by individual primary

schools and primary teachers vary enormously (Satterly, 1989; Broadfoot et al., 1991; McCallum, McAlister, Brown, & Gipps, 1993). Individual teachers frequently adopt their own approaches, according to their classroom situations (Murphy, 1987).

The variety of learning objectives and practical restrictions that occur across age-levels and curricula, indicates the necessity for substantially different assessment techniques. If assessment approaches do differ according to age-level and curriculum, these differential practices would provide a basis for different teaching for teachers at different curricular areas or in different age-levels (Stiggins & Bridgeford 1985).

A variety of assessment activities takes place in primary classrooms which include oral questioning, class or group discussions, check-lists, teacher-made written tests, marking or commenting on performance of various kinds, informal observation of children's performance, work, behaviour, and interaction with the teacher or peers; and a variety of written exercises, such as worksheets, assignments, projects, text-embeded questions and tests. Most of these practices are universal as research from many different countries reports (Morrison, 1974; Rowntree, 1977; Cassotakis, 1981; Fennesy, 1982; Shipman, 1983; Gullickson, 1985; Stiggins & Bridgeford, 1985; Anderson, 1989; Satterly, 1989; McCallum et al., 1993; Broadfoot et al., 1994). Similar practices applied the Greek teachers according to the findings of this study (chapter 9).

The major theme which emerges from this situation is how teachers utilise these techniques to support teaching/learning.

It has to be noticed that this review of the assessment practices aims to assist in answering one of the main questions of this study, i.e. 'how big is the gap between

the assessment practices applied by the Greek teachers of the study and what research reports as desirable'.

Bachor and Anderson (1994) report that Canadian teachers were using an array of assessment procedures with observation being the most widely used. Other common assessment practices included collection and review of student work samples, tests, and student self assessments. However, these approaches are not discrete, specific activities; rather, they constitute broad categories of assessment practice and vary considerably in application from time to time, and from teacher to teacher.

The assessments that influence classroom learning and students' academic and personal self-concept are those developed and used by teachers on a daily basis. With experience, teachers come to trust their own observations and professional judgements regarding student achievement and rely on student behaviour and products as indices of growth and development (Stiggins, 1985).

Salmon-Cox (1981) reports that teachers when talking of how they assess their students, most frequently mention "observation". Dorr-Bremme and Herman (1986) report that nearly every respondent in a national study reported that "my own observations and student's classwork" were crucial or important sources of information.

Paper -and- pencil techniques and observations are the two primary methods for collecting information about pupils, teaching and classroom climate. Much of the information for classroom decision making comes from teacher observation, not from paper -and- pencil assessments, since they are time consuming to administer and score. Unplanned observations make note of idiosyncratic, unsystematic happenings in the classroom which the teacher sees, mentally records, and

interprets (Airasian, 1991). The Council of Europe (1989) report that in most primary schools in Europe, the main mode of assessing pupils is continued observation.

Several researchers in the U.S.A. conclude from their studies of testing in the schools that teachers purposefully go beyond test scores and are intent on using observation-based approaches to gather information for decision-making (Dorr-Bremme & Herman, 1986; Kellaghan, Madaus, & Airasian, 1982; Salmon-Cox, 1981).

There is evidence that teachers do not trust assessment instruments provided by external bodies such as standardized tests, and the like. They rely on the instruments they themselves develop, teacher-made tests, essays, reports etc. (Walstrom & Danley, 1976; Dorr-Bremme, 1983; McCallum et al., 1993).

For assessment to be of maximum use to assist pupils' learning, they need to be involved in the assessment process. Some kind of collaborative assessment between teacher and student often appears in primary classrooms. It involves discussion and negotiation between teacher and pupil, about assessment criteria, methods and any grading. It accomplishes the above aim and provides valuable feedback to the pupil (Harris & Bell, 1986; Broadfoot, 1987a; Satterly, 1989).

Constructively appraising the work of peers is an already established practice in some subjects and fields. Many teachers encourage their students to exchange work with one another in class (Sadler, 1989). Students develop their pool of strategies by learning to revise and refine their own work in cooperation with the teacher, and by editing and helping other students to improve theirs (Pianko, & Radzik, 1980; Chater, 1984; Harris and Bell, 1986).

Formal testing under carefully controlled conditions is often only a small component of the total set of evaluation activities in a course, especially in the early years of schooling (Crooks, 1988; Airasian, 1991). In two studies (Dorr-Bremme & Herman, 1986; Haertel 1986), it was found that on average, in elementary school tests occupied pupils for about 5% of their time. Much additional time is spent on other activities that are evaluated, formally or informally. Particular emphasis is placed on these non-test approaches at the elementary level (Gullickson, 1985).

The tests teachers use more frequently are those that fit their practical circumstances: formal and informal assessments they themselves develop or seek out for the information they provide; and curriculum embedded tests. These are immediately accessible, proximal in intended purposes to the tasks teachers must accomplish and "content consonant" (Dorr-Bremme, 1983). Teachers use means of assessment that are immediately accessible and for which results are quickly available. In general, they use methods that they believe accurately measure what they think they have taught.

Teachers' decisions about which particular techniques to employ is a practical matter, not a "scientific" or technical one. That is, they tend to use and consult the results of whatever assessment means are present in the setting and relevant for the purposes at hand.

Bateson (1990) studied several science teachers from all age-levels in British Columbia, Canada. He found that first, they depend most heavily on their own objective-type tests on which to base student evaluations. Second, that attendance and classroom behaviour become more important and oral tests become less important as the age-level increases.

Stiggins and Bridgeford (1985) found that with respect to subject areas, maths and science teachers appear to give more emphasis to their own objective tests. By and large, teachers are the only raters of their students' performance, and they rely heavily on mental record-keeping to store and retrieve information on student performance. As students progress through the school so does the tendency to write down the criteria and inform students of them, plan scoring procedures, define levels of performance, and conduct blind rating. These findings are in line with the findings of the present study (chapter 9).

Pollard et al. (1994) report from England and Wales that very few infant school teachers were using standardised tests. However, marking of written work was universally practised with the emphasis on doing it collaboratively, with the pupil, often with a tick, 'smiley-face' or message to give personal reinforcement and encouragement. In this way they attempted to initiate pupils into a kind of self-assessment. Observation of individuals and small groups stood out as the major domain of innovation in assessment practice and teachers were found to be making this more formalised than before. The authors remark that although they found that assessment was implemented in a more structured, disciplined and accountable way, nearly all the teachers noticed its undesirable effects; it was time-consuming, and was regarded as amounting to bureaucratic paper-pushing operation.

Overall, they found a much greater emphasis on assessment and record-keeping; some considerable resentment at the time demands and the perceived unnecessary formalization of much of it; fears about the potential impact of such pervasive assessment and recording on the teaching-learning process, relationships with parents and the pupils themselves.

Osborn and Broadfoot (1992) report that the English infant teachers they studied remain individualistic in their outlook, basing much of what they do and believe on

personal experience rather than on generalizeable knowledge and practice. Nias (1989) has referred to such teachers as being atheoretical and school bounded.

Broadfoot et al. (1991) comment on the assessment practices in infant schools in England and Wales and conclude by recognising, the critical role of validity if the assessment is to be at all useful and meaningful; that teachers are being required to face up to the critically important role of assessment in monitoring systematically the progress and learning needs of each student. The teachers they investigated have improved their observation and individual curriculum planning skills, and have been trained to apply assessments of this kind on an on-going basis.

Similar findings in improving teachers' assessing skills reported as well by McCallum et al. (1993) who identified three groups of infant teachers implementing national assessment in Key Stage One of the English National Curriculum: 'Critical Intuitives', 'Evidence Gatherers', and 'Systematic Planners'. The present study also identified groups of teachers assessing in rather different ways, 'assessment styles' (chapter 10). Bachor and Anderson (1994) underline the many uncertainties that primary teachers have about classroom assessment operation.

Each assessment technique has its particular strengths and weaknesses. It is important for teachers to choose an approach best fitted for providing the kind of information required for a particular purpose. Rowntree (1991) reflects on the choice of the approach:

> This decision sometimes will be taken in advance... what questions to ask, whether or not to set a test or a task. Sometimes it will be an "on-the-spot" decision, whether or not to pay heed to a particular event as a source of assessment data. Either way, whether planning assessment events or admitting those that have "just happened", what criteria we apply? First and foremost, we must apply criteria of educational relevance. For instance, does a particular assessment method seen to "go with" the content and style of the teaching and learning expected by our students? (p.162).

Satterly (1989) notes:

> It is difficult to choose which of several apparently conflicting modes of assessment best reflect the educational intentions of teachers and schools or which combination best serves the evaluation of the attainment of educational objectives (p. 38).

Frith and Macintosh (1984), suggest that teachers selecting the appropriate assessment technique must bear in mind the following important considerations: the purpose for which the assessment is to be undertaken; time and resources available; age and ability of students. They suggest a balance for the combination of information obtained from the use of several techniques.

Overall, the practices teachers use most often everyday in the classroom, correspond to the practical needs they face and the routine tasks they must carry out. Further, in all these activities and making choices antecedent to them, teachers become themselves practical reasoners and decision makers in their every day profession (Dorr-Bremme, 1983).

In general, the above evidence shows that many teachers rely upon and trust their personal interactive experience with children in the classroom. They tend not to trust the results of one test or one assessment approach, without reference to everyday teaching evidence. As McLean (1985) points out, evaluation is more craft than a profession; teachers measure and evaluate more through a "folk knowledge" than from a theoretical and practical base. Several researchers (Anderson, 1989; Brown, 1991) suggest building on good current practice.

Broadfoot (1979), examines the way assessments are implemented by shifting the focus from the actual assessment practices to the predominance of concern about techniques at the literature which is confirmed by disputes about:

> The accuracy of formal examinations, the advantages and disadvantages of objective tests, the potential of item-banking, the relative merits of various moderation and scaling techniques, the sophisticated statistical procedures being developed for fixing discrimination and facility values, the debate over the desirability of continuous versus point in time assessment (p. 18).

The focus of such discussion is on examining current practice and working out how it may be changed to become more efficient and manifestly more fair. The importance of this is compounded by the effects of the use of particular assessment techniques (Broadfoot, 1979). HMI report (1990) emphasises the role of teacher assessment in the context of ongoing classroom interaction and not just referring to written products:

> Good assessment practice involved a carefully balanced combination of observation, questioning, discussion and marking...for example practical work gave the opportunity for questioning and discussion...questioning helped children to learn and their responses provided evidence of the depth and quality of that learning (HMI, 1990, p.13).

2.4. Self-Assessment

The optimum goal of the assessment practices is that students should be able to assess themselves and to pursue new goals. Shipman (1983) argues that self-assessment has profound implications for teaching and learning style, since a commitment to share with children responsibility for learning suggests the adoption of classroom practices which embrace the ideals, goals and principles of self-assessment and encourage teachers to develop skills in participant observation rather than didactic skills.

The main idea of the Records of Achievements is that students take more control of their own learning, set targets for themselves, actively assess their own achievements and thus become more confident, responsible, adaptable and able to work as part of a team. RoAs have also required teachers to abandon some of their authority and undertake cooperative enterprises with the students (Broadfoot et al., 1990).

Towler and Broadfoot (1992) point out that the principle of assessment as first and foremost the responsibility of the learner is valid and can be realistically applied in education from the early years. As far as the rationale of the self-assessment is concerned they point out that:

> Involving children in the assessment process is a natural extension of the child-centred approach towards learning characteristics. Reflection and evaluation can encourage understanding of what is expected, improve motivation, lead to pride in positive achievement and offer a realistic appraisal of weaknesses (p. 138).

They also explain that the process of self-assessment is likely to lead to a positive influence upon teaching style and management; in creating a more truly democratic partnership between teacher and children. As they conclude:

> A coherent policy of self-assessment helps children to develop powers of reflection and self-criticism, encourages motivation by giving responsibility to children for their learning and by implying that their opinions matter (p. 140).

2.5. Recording

For most primary school teachers day-to-day records are idiosyncratic notes and comments and reminders in relation to specific pupils' progress and future activities. Most teachers keep these notes in their heads (Airasian, 1991; Pollard et al., 1994), others have a book which is an integral part of their practice but of little use for any systematic recording of progress to be shared with colleagues (Harlen, 1978; Black & Broadfoot, 1982; Gipps, 1990). Many teachers regard records as rather a chore to complete and make little use of those passed on by other teachers (Murphy, 1987). This view is criticised (Gipps, 1990) because first, it is a waste of everyone's time to ignore previous records of children: a more positive view of teacher assessment might be that teachers could maximise the benefits of their colleagues' insights by reading the records of children who they undertake. Second, without proper records the information which is passed from one teacher to the next is likely to be of a general nature, about the child's overall ability, rather than specific information related to what the child can and cannot do.

Clift, Weiner, and Wilson, (1981) report considerable variation in the recording procedures adopted by primary schools in Great Britain. Conner et al. (1991) suggest that a recording school system, should not demand excessive teacher time; should not be too 'jargonistic' or lengthy; and should not be a device to increase school control over the lives of children.

2.6. Difficulties in implementing classroom assessment

The constraints teachers encounter in implementing good classroom assessment include the enormous bulk of interaction which takes place in the classroom, questions of subjectivity and reliability of these assessments, the lack of systematic recording approaches to keep the information, and of course, the need to control the class while all this is being done (Airasian, 1991; Broadfoot et al., 1991).

The most commonly expressed constraints by teachers in England and Wales are that of time, to develop statements of assessment, to collect information, to record and report. Another important issue refers to teacher competence in this area, which has to do with the initial training and the INSET on assessment. The Greek teachers of this study expressed similar constraints (chapters 8, 9, 10).

Brown, M. (1991) reveals many such problems investigating the trial of the pilot SATs of the National Curriculum in England and Wales. Such difficulties stem from issues like those of summative assessment when teachers have to report on large numbers of attainment targets. She also mentioned the issue of differentiation which engenders so many difficulties because of the wide range of targets and levels required to be included. The author argues that the requirement of summative assessment and reporting at the end of each Key Stage produces a whole set of problems concerned with methods of processing results such as combination, aggregation, moderation and reporting.

The major teachers' concern about reporting and (RoAs), was 'time': time for teaching and assessment involving one -to -one contact with children; time for discussions with pupils; time for record keeping, and time for forward planning. Lack of time, feeling of insecurity, and the need for support were certainly factors lying behind teachers' repeated requests to a project on recording and reporting, (Freedman, 1991) and for examples of materials used in other schools. However, the author notes that since every school is different, and it should be the materials which are adapted to the school and not the school to the materials.

Broadfoot et al. (1991) also point out the problems related to the successful realisation of the ideal. Among them are the nature and range of the assessments teachers are being required to make; the time, energy, and skills necessary to conduct them effectively; the unavoidable technical problems related to validity,

reliability and comparability, and most important, the accomplishment of what is by itself "a process of professional development against a political backdrop of power politics and competition; of 'high stakes' testing and simplistic assumptions about quality".

Torrance (1991) notes similar difficulties evaluating the SATs-pilot 1990 at Key Stage One of the English National Curriculum. Teachers complained about, workload and that relationships with parents were affected; difficulties in trying to focus on small groups of pupils for the purpose of assessment while also managing the rest of the class; pupils might be ignored or given 'busywork' with obvious consequences for the quality of the teaching and learning process

> The standard of work produced in non-assessed activities has deteriorated steadily since the beginning of the term... The children's behaviour is also deteriorating as the teachers can no longer give the class the attention they need and deserve (Torrance, 1991, p.132).

This extent and complexity of the English National Curriculum and assessment procedures have resulted in teacher overload, curriculum fragmentation, and unmanageable assessment requirements. These problems were officially recognised by the Government and became the subject of a review by Sir Ron Dearing (Pollard et al., 1994).

Many people dispute the validity and reliability of classroom assessments, arguing that they are unsystematic.

2.7. Overview

This chapter so far examined the issue of classroom assessment in practice and pointed out several interesting points that are summarised here. The complexity of the operation became obvious. Teachers apply a great variety of practices, dependent mainly on the subject and the age-level. Observation seems to be the

modal approach followed by paper and pencil ones. In primary classrooms the evidence collection is mostly informal subjective, intuitive, idiosyncratic, and unsystematic. Formal testing seems to be only a small fraction of assessment approaches. Teachers found by and large to trust the instruments they themselves develop, and their own observations instead of external instruments, tests, SATs, etc. One could say that this reflects a tendency of teachers ownership and autonomy.

There is a trend to involve the student on his/her assessment (cooperative approaches, self-assessment, Records of Achievement). Another interesting point is that teachers do not rely in a single source of information but they bear in mind the everyday performance of the children. Attendance and classroom behaviour become more important and oral tests become less important as the age-level increases.

Teachers typically tend to apply practices to which they have immediate access and accomplish their practical needs. The decision about which specific technique to use is a practical matter, not a scientific one. It was pointed out the necessity for a sampling process to select the evidence needed. For the selection of the proper approach teachers have to bear in mind the purposes they pursue, the age-level, the time and the resources available. Research says that by and large primary teachers keep mental records of their daily assessments. Among the problems teachers face are the time restrictions, the undesirable influence on teacher pupils relationships, the lack of assessment training, the workload, the lack of confidence. However, there is evidence that teachers in England and Wales, for instance, have started to become professionals assessors, having gradually obtained the knowledge, skills and confidence to carry out the operation. Eventually, there were suggestions for improvements by disseminating and using cases of good practice, and providing the necessary training.

The dispute of classroom assessment criticises the unsystematic evidence collection and recording, the lack of 'hard' data, the lack of validity and reliability of the information based on such phenomenological data. The next section examines in more detail this dispute of the quality of classroom assessments.

2.8. QUESTIONING CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT'S QUALITY

Introduction

This section examines issues regarding the dispute on the quality of classroom assessments, in particular the issues of validity and reliability. Eventually, several approaches for improving the quality of classroom assessments are suggested.

The aim of this section is to show first, evidence of how 'weak' classroom assessments are in terms of validity and reliability, and second, how these factors can be improved. All these could help the interpretation of the study's data and estimate the gap between the desirable practice (according to the literature) and what the Greek teachers do.

When studying the quality of classroom assessment many questions emerge: Does an assessment provide accurate evidence for decision making? Do its results permit accurate and fair conclusions about pupil progress? Does using the results contribute to proper decisions? If the answer to these questions is yes, the assessments must be both reliable and valid (Herman, Aschbacher, & Winters, 1992).

2.8.1. A need for quality improvement

This need stems from criticisms that classroom assessment quality is poor. Several writers have queried: Are teachers' short objective tests and quizzes reliable? If not, does an accumulation of unreliable data yield a reliable conclusion? What are the particular practices teachers use to simplify the information processing requirements of the classroom? What are the implications for the reliability and validity of the results? How far can we generalise from the evidence? (Rowntree, 1977; Shipman, 1983; Brophy, 1983; Hoge, 1984; Stiggins et al., 1986; Shorrocks, 1993).

Jasman (1987) found that teachers' assessments were inconsistent over time and between individuals, as well as being influenced by a number of characteristics which were unrelated to pupil performance in the areas of the primary curriculum being assessed. Approaches involving teachers' assessments appeared to be problematic since in these more 'informal' procedures teachers' impressions provide the basis for formulating a judgement of the quality of educational achievement. The use of such procedures has been strongly criticised on the grounds of assessor bias and the general unreliability of such procedures.

The obvious objection to building on the often intuitive and implicit assessment procedures of teachers is that it is liable to produce little that is both credible and objective (Shipman, 1983). Good assessors will always be sceptical as to how far they can depend on their interpretations of the 'raw data' of assessment. How true are they? On many cases assessors have been misled as to what ability or disposition they were seeing evidence of. Hence, for instance, it is not valid to infer from a pupil's untidy desk or disordered appearance that he has an untidy, disordered mind (Rowntree, 1977).

There seems to be a widespread assumption, particularly among school psychologists and educational researchers that teachers are generally poor judges of the attributes of their students, that their perceptions are often subject to bias or error (Egan and Archer, 1985; Brophy, 1983; Hoge, 1984). Hoge and Coladarci (1989) reviewed 16 studies which focus on the relationship between teachers' judgements of their students' academic performance and the students' actual performance on an achievement criterion.

Interestingly, the studies examined yield data indicating generally high levels of agreement between the judgemental measures and the standardized achievement test scores. These data support the validity of the teacher judgements of academic achievement. The authors' conclusion that the performance judgements are, by and large, valid, has important implications for the practical use of classroom assessments, contradicting as it does those who express doubts regarding the quality of teacher assessment. Although, according to the authors, the studies reviewed by no means provide a final evaluation of the accuracy of achievement judgements or any evidence that the judgements are without error, their review does not support the total rejection of teacher judgements that one sometimes encounters. Some teacher-developed assessments have validity, since they allow teachers accurately to predict student performance (Fyans, 1985; Kellaghan et al., 1982; Hoge and Coladarci, 1989).

Fleming and Chambers (1983) cite a need for teachers to write better tests, with an adequate number of items, particularly items that are less ambiguous and require more of students than the simple recall of facts and information. Stiggins and Bridgeford, (1985) reported inattention by some teachers to those procedures likely to promote valid, reliable performance assessment, such as clearly articulating and communicating scoring criteria, defining acceptable levels of performance, repeating observations, keeping written records, and checking judgements against

other data. However, they did find that attention to quality control increased as grade level increased.

Other studies (Gullickson, 1982; Gullickson & Ellwein, 1985) of teachers' testing strategies provide evidence of a lack of quality control strategies. For example, Gullickson (1982) reports that most limited test questions to short answer and matching, which test lower cognitive levels. Later on the author (Gullickson, 1984a, 1984b) writes that teachers have not been taught how to evaluate their test items, take necessary steps to improve quality, or accurately set criterion levels for student performance.

The two main criteria of good assessment are validity and reliability and are examined in the following sections.

2.8.2. Validity

Validity deals with the collection of appropriate evidence that permit teachers to make generalizations about pupil behaviour or performance (Airasian, 1991).

The validity of assessments raises many questions for the teacher such as: Would I see similar evidence if I observed the students in another place or time? Can I predict anything of the student's future? How far can I trust my own judgements? (Rowntree, 1991; Shorrocks, 1993). How confidently can I generalize from what I have seen? (Rowntree, 1991; Gipps, 1990). Are we assessing what we think we are assessing? (Broadfoot, 1982; Gipps, 1990; Rowntree, 1991). An assessment with high validity is obviously one which gets as close as possible to the children's understanding: to what the pupil knows, understands and can do (Conner et al., 1991).

Two factors are well known (Rowntree, 1977; Satterly, 1981; Dimitropoulos, 1981; Child, 1993; Vamvoukas, 1988; Airasian, 1991) as threatening validity. First, observer bias: Teachers' pre-knowledge, first impressions, or personal biases interfere with their ability to make a fair and objective assessment of a pupil. Second, logical errors: When teachers judge pupils based on the wrong characteristics (e.g. observe attention and judge learning; observe clothes and judge ability).

Desforges (1992) remarks that traditional assessment including profiles, folios and 'authentic' activities has not paid sufficient attention to issues of validity. The key question of validity seems to the author to be 'to what degree are these assessment procedures promoting quality learning? Herman et al. (1992) argue that assessments themselves are neither valid nor invalid; their validity depends on the purpose for which they are used.

There are a number of ways of looking at validity: face validity, concurrent validity, construct validity, predictive validity, and so on (Thordike & Hagen, 1969; Deale, 1975; Raban, 1983; Popham, 1981; Rowntree, 1991; Shorrocks, 1993). Validity has to be attached to the assessor's interpretations of the resulting data, not to the assessment method (Rippere, 1974).

The most important aspect for teachers is content validity that is that the instrument should match as closely as possible the objectives of the teaching it is assessing (Jasman, 1987; Gipps, 1990; Shorrocks, 1993).

2.8.3. Reliability

Reliability is concerned with the extent to which the results can be relied upon (Conner et al., 1991). One can rely on the assessment evidence if the approaches used of collecting the evidence would always give similar results. Without reliable

techniques to assess or guide judgement there is only guess-work about the value of the evidence (Shipman, 1983). The reliability of an assessment procedure has provided an estimate of how much confidence can be placed in its precision (Jasman, 1987). Broadfoot (1982) writes that reliability refers to whether the assessments of different raters of tests are comparable.

Reliability is a rather confusing term and some writers have tried to substitute 'consistency' meaning how far the test would give the same results if it could be done again by the same children under the same conditions (Deale, 1975; Gipps, 1990; Wilson, 1990; Shorrocks, 1993).

Airasian (1991) referred to such obvious threats to reliability as: Inadequate behaviour sampling (when too few observations prevent teachers from learning about pupils' typical behaviour and characteristics) and observing behaviours in one setting (e.g. the playground) and assuming behaviour will be the same in other setting, (e.g. in the classroom).

2.8.4. Utility - Educational relevance

Utility, a third desirable quality of good assessment includes the convenience, flexibility and inexpensiveness of the assessment, inevitably considerations of some importance (Nuttall, 1987; Wilson, 1990).

Rowntree (1977) used the terms 'educational relevance, respectability and cost'. Educational relevance means that the teacher must be satisfied that particular techniques would be appropriate: first, to the content and style of the teaching and learning experienced by the pupil, second, to the educational objectives and goals. A third proviso is that they must be those most likely to produce reliable indications of the abilities or qualities looked for in the pupil. Boyer (1987) put it this way:

> In the end, excellence in education will be achieved not simply through better testing but through better teaching (p. 262).

The concepts of validity and reliability are considered to be 'twin' in that they are interdependent (Frith & Macintosh, 1984). Reliability as Nuttall and Willmott (1972) have pointed out, is a necessary but not sufficient condition of validity.

Without any doubt arguments questioning the validity and reliability of classroom assessment are very important and scientifically 'significant'. However, it could be argued that though most of classroom assessment in practice seems to be not statistically significant, the various procedures are *educationally significant*, because, as the reviewed evidence has shown, they are often very revealing. It seems that nothing can replace them despite the application of more rigourous approaches, because they include affective and social qualities which are almost impossible to measure with formal procedures.

2.8.5. Suggestions for improvement

Airasian (1991) made six recommendations for enhancing the validity and reliability of informal assessment. Accordingly, teachers have to:

> (1) be aware that sizing up is going on in the classroom; (2) confirm initial perceptions with subsequent observations and information; (3) try to observe pupil characteristics directly, rather than inferring them from behaviours that may not be related to the characteristic of interest; (4) supplement informal information -gathering methods with more formal, structured methods; (5) observe long enough to be certain that the pupil has had an opportunity to show the teacher his or her typical behaviour; and (6) determine whether different kinds of information about a pupil gave the same results (p.67).

Shipman (1983) outlines steps to add reliability and validity to the everyday impressionistic evaluations of teachers as they go about their work. He argues that most evaluation in the classroom will remain spontaneous and impressionistic. It is needed to motivate, direct and re-direct, check, encourage and reward. The shift in the perception of assessment from summative at the end of a section of work, to

formative to help the pupils learn is an important first step in increasing the value of assessment. He recommends that in schools assessment should arise from the planning of teaching. This not only increases the chances of validity because it is built into the planning of the work, but settles its place in the sequence of learning.

Sutton (1990) argues that to achieve reliable assessment teachers have to reduce the main variables that can affect their judgement, i.e. *context* (the circumstances of assessment); *time* (how many times and over what period of time the teacher have to see an assessment criterion achieved); and *rater*.

According to Jasman (1987) suggestions for improving the validity and reliability of teachers' assessments should be focussed on refining the definitions of the qualities that have to be rated, the development of more systematic techniques for observation and appraisal, and reducing their bias by provision of clear instructions and relatively simple instruments for assessment.

2.8.6. Overview

This section examined issues concerning the dispute of the quality of classroom assessments. The criticism focussed on the unsystematic, inconsistent, intuitive, inaccurate subjective, informal approaches of information gathering, that it is said, yield unreliable results.

It appeared that there are two main trends in the debate of classroom assessment quality. The first trend supports the rather 'narrow' sense of validity and reliability. It mainly examines the extent of these qualities within teacher assessment, in particular, teacher-made tests, from a more 'statistical' point of view. The second trend considers classroom assessments as valid and reliable when they contribute to a fair, consistent, contextual formative assessment that improves the quality of learning.

Overall, there seems to have started a shift from the 'strict scientific' quantitative criteria of validity and reliability, which by and large refer to summative evidence collection, to the more formative and qualitative ones, concerning the utility of assessments in facilitating learning considering procedural and contextual aspects.

In order to improve the quality of classroom assessment research suggests that teachers have to avoid prejudicial assessments, repeat observations, plan their assessments, bear in mind the learning context, think in advance about scoring criteria, assess what has been taught, keep written records and compare assessment evidence against other information.

These themes are of particular interest to the present study, because first, they appear in every classroom; second, they point out what the qualities of good assessment are and how they can be improved (a prime concern for this study). In addition, by considering these themes the findings of the present study on teachers' views and practices could be interpreted, and the gap between what is considered as good practice (according to the literature), and the empirical findings can be indicated. Moreover, these issues confirm the importance of classroom assessment and the need for teachers to be aware of the criteria of good assessments. Finally, in the light of this evidence suggestions can be made for the improvement of assessments and for further research.

The next chapter reviews issues associated with the second phase of classroom assessment i.e. the interpretation of the collected information.

CHAPTER 3: 2ND PHASE: INTERPRETATION

Introduction

During this crucial phase of the assessment process teachers make 'comparisons' between the information collected in the previous phase and the desired standards. These standards may be academic or non academic. The interpretation may be immediate or it may take longer. Of course standards in every case depend on the aims the teacher wishes to fulfil. Such standards might be other students' attainments, whether the aim is comparison for the best outcomes, i.e. *norm-referenced* assessment; or the students' competence in mastering a particular piece of knowledge or skill, i.e. *criterion-referenced* assessment. Another option is the one in which the teacher compares students' performance against their own previous performances, i.e. *self-referenced* assessment.

> In its simplest form, a standard or reference level is a designated degree of performance or excellence. It becomes a *goal* when it is desired, aimed for or aspired to (Sadler, 1989, p. 129).

In a primary classroom teachers routinely make countless judgments of pupils' academic and non academic performances based on acceptable and desirable standards that fall within these three categories of reference. Most scholars identify three main categories of standards to which assessments are referred to, 'norm-referenced', 'criterion-referenced', or 'self-referenced', each in relation to a somewhat different type of measurement. The differences between norm and criterion referenced assessments, lie in the respective purposes, the types of score they yield and their interpretation, as well as the educational policy which they are intended to carry out.

Sometimes teachers give a grade for effort (referring to previous work-levels) and another in reference to the norms of peers or criteria. The tendency to combine the various sorts of reference emerges from the need for teachers to balance different

purposes. Sometimes they need to refer to levels of performance, occasionally to attainment compared with that of other pupils and sometimes to improvements or deteriorations (Shipman, 1983; Airasian, 1991).

These three kinds of referencing can be found in every classroom. 'I want everybody to be able to do this by the end of the morning.' The criterion level is set and the teacher concentrates on checking that the class have attained it. 'There's no reason why John should be able to do it that well and not you Peter.' 'You're going backwards Maria; it was neater last week.' The past performance is set up as reference, and the teacher compares the new work with it as the child is assessed against her own past.

There is a great deal of evidence dealing with advantages and disadvantages of these three types of standards (Glaser, 1963; Bresee, 1976; Rowntree, 1977; Deutsch, 1979; Black & Dockrell, 1984; Black, 1986; Satterly, 1989; Glass, 1978; Slavin, 1977; Gipps, 1990; Airasian, 1991). The following section examines separately these reference standards.

The examination of these standards is closely related to the study's questions regarding first, what evidence have we of the Greek teachers' current practices? and second, how big is the gap between existing practices of the Greek teachers and the desirable according to the literature.

3.1. Norm Referenced Assessment

Much assessment by primary teachers compare the performance of one pupil against that of other pupils. Children may be ranked for comparison or given grades or percentages after consideration of how well they have done against their peers. Any one pupil's grade is determined by reference to how well the rest have done. However, norm-referenced assessment is often of little use in improving teaching.

The difference between norm and criterion referenced is important since grades, marks, and comments mean nothing until the reference is known. Most classroom assessments tend to be referenced against norms of performance of the class as a whole (Rowntree, 1977; Cassotakis, 1981; Shipman, 1983; Satterly, 1989; Airasian, 1991).

Teachers are often required to make judgements about the quality of pupils' performances. The process of judging the quality of pupil's performances is called 'grading'. It is the process by which scores and descriptive information are turned into marks or letters, into grades that depict how well each pupil has learned (Airasian, 1991). To grade a teacher must compare a pupil's performance to some group or standard. For the above pupils the 'norm' is their group and the assessment refers to it.

Norm-referenced tests tend to focus on differences between individuals and groups, making use of some norm to enable comparisons to be made (Jasman, 1987). Such a test according to Harlen (1978) is one

> which has given to a large number of children in controlled conditions and from the results "norms" have been established for different groups of children, usually age groups. The result of giving a test to any child can therefore be compared with the average for a particular group (p. 12).

These tests were most often used as a means of selection and as a basis of prediction of future performance in the 11+ examinations i.e for ranking, or as means of monitoring standards in schools (Jasman, 1987). Michaels (1977) investigated the norm-referenced standards and designated the reward structure associated with this practice as

> individual competition, in which grades are assigned to students based on their performances relative to those of their classmates (p.87)

and distinguished it from

> individual reward contingencies, in which grades are assigned to students on the basis of how much material each student apparently masters (p. 87).

Teachers look for a grading curve which is fair to the students and which represents academic standards that the teacher feels are appropriate (Satterly, 1989; Dimitropoulos, 1989; Airasian, 1991). The comparison which is used to assign grades to pupils can influence the effort and attitude of the students (Child, 1986; Rowntree, 1977; Mavrogiorgos, 1988). Norm-referenced standards tend to undermine the learning and effort of students who continually score near the bottom of the class, because they continually receive poor grades (Crooks, 1988; Deutsch, 1979; Ebel and Frisbie, 1986; Airasian, 1991). Competitive grading approaches such as norm-referenced grading, which make a pupil's success or failure dependent largely on the performance of peers, can also reduce cooperation and interdependence in study (Crooks, 1988). Asccording to Satterly (1989):

> Many teachers believe that drawing comparisons between individuals and providing scores which describe the child's standing in a group serve chiefly to foster a spirit of competition which is inimical to the maintenance of a climate for learning in which children are able to develop at their own pace (Satterly 1989, p.40).

During the sixties and seventies many researchers criticised the norm-referenced approach (McIntyre, 1970; Kriewall, 1972; Popham, 1973; Carver, 1975; Drever, 1978; Brown, M. 1991). The criticisms refer to the ways in which the tests were constructed and administered and the use of their results. Deutsch (1979) summarises the approach shortcomings

> students are more anxious, they think less well of themselves and of their work, they have less favourable attitudes toward their classmates and less friendly relations with them, and they feel less of a sense of responsibility toward them (p. 399).

The empirical data of this study (chapters 8, 9) report the frequent use either covertly or overtly of such norm-referenced approaches in Greek primary classrooms, provide illustrative classroom examples and examine their impacts on the children.

3.2. Criterion referenced assessment

Limitations of norm-referenced assessment practical and philosophical resulted the development in response, the criterion-referenced assessment.

Instead of grading by comparing a pupil's performance to that of other pupils, the teacher can compare the pupil's performance to pre-established performance standards. Assessment approaches that compare a pupil's performance to a predefined performance standard are called criterion-referenced. Alternative terms used are: content-referenced, domain-referenced. Such content is determined by consideration of objectives. Hence, the assessment is objective-referenced. But the reference is also to criteria of performance, to mastery of some specific standards. These standards define the level of mastery or performance a pupil must attain to receive a particular grade. By assessing pupils' competence in a particular level of learning it shows if they are ready to go on to the next learning unit because they have mastered the prerequisites (Satterly, 1989; Airasian, 1991). Pupils are assessed on the basis of their own work, independent of the work of others. Criterion-referenced assessment is the most commonly used assessment system (Hills, 1981; Nitko, 1983; Ebel and Frisbie, 1986).

There are two kinds of performance standards that are used in criterion-referenced assessments. The first kind specify in detail the particular behaviours the student must perform in order to get a particular grade. The second is the most commonly used sort of standard and is used mainly with paper- and -pencil achievement tests.

In this standard, cut off scores based on the percentage of items answered correctly are used to award grades (Airasian, 1991).

Research stresses that the performance standards that are used in criterion-referenced assessments should be reasonable given the ability of the class and the nature of the subject matter; they should be also academically honest and challenge the students (Hills, 1981; Broadfoot & Osborn, 1987; Crooks, 1988). Natriello (1982) found that students who perceived standards for their performance as unattainable were more likely to become disaffected from high school.

Airasian (1991) suggests that the performance standards should be defined before assessment is carried out. He also notes that lowering standards to ensure high grades discourages effort and seriousness in students' approach to the subject matter.

> Fairness means teaching pupils the things on which they are assessed, using assessment procedures that are clear and suited to the pupils' level and classroom experiences, and establishing performance standards or a grading curve that is realistic in terms of what pupils can attain if they work hard (Airasian, 1991, p. 324).

Attempts have been made to develop tests and other instruments which describe the achievements of children compared with established standards (Harlen, 1978).

> Items on criterion- referenced tests were devised so that the score could be expressed in terms of the degree of mastery of that particular set of skills (Jasman, 1987, p.62).

Simpson (1990) comments on the effectiveness of the criterion-referenced assessment system in Scotland, England and Wales and asserts that criterion-referenced assessment is unlikely to improve learning. She argues that a single form of assessment can not serve the separate purposes of monitoring pupil attainment and certification and of improving teaching and learning. She adds that

this kind of formal assessment does little more than providing data to permit national monitoring of educational standards; and that it has no direct educational merit since it is limited to the determination of how much students remember of what they have been taught.

Popham (1974) warned against vague criteria in criterion referenced assessment. In 1978 he noted serious shortcomings of countless criterion-referenced tests and suggested isolating a small number of very important behaviours to be measured. Later on, in 1987 he argued that just a few broad objectives for assessment are adequate. Such difficulties are also reported in developing grade criteria for GCSE and for Standard Grade in Scotland (Murphy, 1986; Gipps, 1986).

Gipps (1992) comments on the development of the assessment of the English National Curriculum and points out that criterion-referenced assessment has been hailed as the great liberator from norm-referenced tests with their unfair function of comparison. Many believe that the more specific and detailed the criteria, the more accurate the assessment. However, she notes that the more detailed and specific the criteria, the more cumbersome the assessment becomes, and the more fragmented the curriculum is likely to be. The more general the criteria, the fewer there will be and the assessment task is then more manageable but less accurate. One of the key problems with criterion-referenced assessment is the problem of trying to combine clarity of criteria with utility. And she suggests:

> We need to experiment with the level of generality /specificity of the criteria required for them to work, particularly in relation to teachers being able to interpret them and make their own criteria if necessary...we also need to discover the optimum number of assessment criteria... (Gipps, 1992, pp. 278-9).

Torrance (1991) suggests the pursuit of a "criterion-referenced system... which works" (Gipps, 1992), involving practical, school-based investigation and

development, focussing on the problems and possibilities of making learning goals and processes more explicit and accessible, involving pupils in the selection of evidence which demonstrates attainment, designing more flexible pathways to accommodate formative feedback.

Harlen & Qualter (1991) examine several issues that are related to the development of SATs. As far as the issue of the relationship between teaching and learning is concerned they note:

> SATs would allow greater comparability between children and a means of detecting any systematic variations in teachers' assessment. They were basically for summative assessment rather than to assist learning, which is the purpose of formative assessment, although it was acknowledged that learning would take place as a result of the activities (p.142).

In the Greek case the official directives (Law 1566, 1985) the curriculum and the teachers' manual suggested the use of criterion-referenced approaches, and the avoidance of norm-referenced ones. The data of the present study (chapters 8,9,10) indicate how far this policy was realised in the classroom.

3.3. Self-referenced assessment

The most typical approach of giving assessment meaning in the primary classroom is to refer to *previous performance*. A pupil is reported as working less well than before. There is evidence that time taken to learn to a given standard is the most important and educationally relevant dimension on which children differ (Bloom, 1976; Child, 1981). This self-referencing is most popular in the classroom where teaching and assessment coincide.

> 'Well done, that's much better' or 'Now I think you can work a little faster than that' are typical of this running assessment referring the pupil to previous performance to judge the present and prepare for the future. There is no time to refer to criteria or norms. Such self-assessment is also used in reporting formally. The comments in school records or to parents often refer to 'keeping up the good work', to 'room for improvement' or 'pleased with the progress made since last term' (Shipman, 1983, p.11).

Harlen (1978) called the self-assessment, "pupil referenced assessment", and pointed out that it was seen as less invidious than comparisons with norms and criterion levels since it valued the individual and judgements were made in the context of that individual alone. Though norm and criterion referenced tests could be used for this purpose, the essential difference between these modes of assessment and pupil referenced assessment lay in the method of interpreting the data obtained from using such methods (Jasman, 1987).

However, there are difficulties in such a system which arrives at a grade by examining the improvement a student has shown over time (Airasian, 1991; Ebel and Frisbie, 1986; Hills, 1981). In this system a student's performance early in a term is compared to the student's performance later in a term. Students who show the most progress or growth get the highest grades. However, the deficiency of this approach is that children who do well early in the term have little chance to improve, and thus have little opportunity to receive good grades. Low scorers at the start of the term have the best chance for improvement, and thus higher grades (Airasian, 1991).

3.4. Norm, criterion, self-referenced assessment: impacts

Brown M., (1991) reviews the development of the criterion and norm-referenced approaches during the sixties and seventies and remarks that the central concern of the criterion-referenced approach was to provide information about the specific knowledge and abilities of pupils through their performance on various kinds of

tasks that are interpretable in terms of what the pupils know or can do, without reference to the performance of others.

Wergin (1988) points out that if the purpose of assessment is to distribute students on a scale of ability or knowledge from most to least, a norm-referenced test is needed. When the purpose is to judge whether students have completed the course objectives satisfactorily, this would imply the use of criterion-referenced tests. Norm-referenced assessments are based on the assumption that the best test is one that depend on the purpose the teacher aims and produces a normal (bell-shaped) distribution of responses and maximizes the distance among examinees (Wergin, 1988).

Further the author remarks that the criterion-referenced measures are based more on intuitive than on statistical logic. Here the assumption is that the best test informs how well the student has mastered a set of very specific objectives; thus, a normal distribution of scores is not important or even desirable, since the instructional goal is maximum learning rather than maximum discrimination.

Williams, Pollack, and Ferguson, (1975) found no significant differences between the achievement and self-reported attitudes or school-related behaviour of students exposed to norm-referenced and criterion-referenced standards.

Norm-referenced standards have been compared to self-referenced standards for their impacts on student attainments. Slavin (1980) found that students assessed against their previous attainments in experimental classes achieved more on a final standardised test than students in control classes assessed by norm-referenced standards. Rheinberg (1983) found that students working under self-referenced standards devised more realistic strategies of goal setting, more often attributed

their success to their effort, and performed better than students working under norm-referenced standards.

Bolocofsky & Mescher (1984) found that self-referenced standards worked best with students with low self-esteem and internal locus of control. Criterion-referenced standards worked best with students with low self-esteem and external locus of control. Norm-referenced standards worked best with students with high self-esteem, regardless of locus of control.

Hanna and Cashin (1987) suggest that if the instructional goals are general, complete mastery of the educational domain is unrealistic, and if the ultimate purpose is to select the best and the brightest, teachers have to consider the use of a norm-referenced approach; if the goals are quite specific, or if the ultimate purpose is to ensure that students have mastered certain competencies, they have to consider the criterion-referenced approach.

3.5. Overview

This chapter examined the standards to which teachers refer in order to interpret the assessment evidence. The reference might be norm, criterion or children's previous performance(s). The advantages and disadvantages of each approach were explained. Norm and criterion referenced tests mainly provided results for external consumption serving the purposes of prediction, selection, curriculum evaluation and monitoring standards. These purposes however, do not help in evaluating children's levels of development, evaluating teaching practices or providing feedback to students on achievement of specific objectives. The main point which emerges from all this is that the key aspect for consideration in the selection of assessment practices is the way in which the collected evidence is to be interpreted and for what purpose.

Having examined research evidence on the main advantages and limitations of each reference standards, and for which purposes they are suitable, it is interesting to see in the empirical part of this study: Which reference standards suggested the Greek directives in the primary school (chapter 6); whether the teachers of the study followed these directives; and if not why not? (chapters 8, 9); and what implications their practices had on children's learning and development (chapter 9). Eventually, to see whether these teachers were aware of the potential and limitations of each reference approach. Chapters (8,9) yield evidence of the study's teachers' current knowledge and practice. This is compared in the discussion chapter (11) against what research suggests in the present chapter in order to estimate how big is the gap between their practices and what is desirable, according to the literature (a key question of the study).

From the previous evidence a need for consideration of the content of the assessment criteria becomes obvious. The following chapter, therefore, refers to educational objectives and examines what teachers look for, when assessing.

CHAPTER 4: THE CONTENT OF ASSESSMENTS

Introduction

A significant aspect of the classroom assessment enterprise refers to the content of the assessment goals. Some questions emerge:

Which qualities do teachers look for in their pupils? Whether they have learned a given concept, piece of knowledge; whether they comply with the classroom rules or if they are interested in the lesson? What sort of goals are considered as most appropriate? Are pupils and teachers clearly aware of the objectives that are pursued during a given teaching session?

In this chapter, a consideration of the literature on these issues will help the interpretation of the study's data; it might explain why teachers assess particular pupils' features; show the necessity for teachers and students to be aware of the learning objectives.

This chapter deals with cognitive and non-cognitive qualities, and the weight teachers place on each category; and looks deeper at the cognitive ones. It also examines which children's qualities teachers intend to assess in the classroom, and if eventually they assess only these qualities.

4.1. A multidimensional content of assessments: Cognitive and non-cognitive qualities

Very frequently assessments are global. The pupil is good, fair or poor, but it is not made clear in what. Definition in advance means distinguishing between assessment of attainment, or effort, or ability, or improvement or deterioration, or potential, or behaviour. The definition of what is being assessed adds meaning to the exercise (Rowntree, 1977; Cassotakis, 1981; Shipman, 1983; Satterly, 1989; Dimitropoulos, 1989).

There is evidence that teachers assess both cognitive and non-academic characteristics - attitudes, and behaviours- (Black & Broadfoot, 1982; Dimitropoulos, 1989; Airasian, 1991). Teachers use information about pupils participation and involvement in the lesson to judge how well their lesson is going, and they value information on their pupils affective characteristics (Clark and Peterson, 1976). Wood and Napthali (1975), for instance, found that the teachers in their study would prefer, when they take a new class, to have information mainly about the following six affective attributes: Interest, class participation, quietness, confidence, tidiness and behaviour, as well as mathematics ability. The authors classified these constructs into three broader dimensions, cognitive, affective, and motivational.

Management routines play a very large part in teachers' classroom behaviour. Doyle, (1986) found that beginning teachers are concerned more with their own teaching ability and performance whereas experienced teachers expressed more concern for the pupils learning.

Although cognitive assessment is a dominant interest, teachers observe, evaluate and act upon hints of on-going social behaviour and upon their perceptions of the more or less prevailing personal traits of pupils. All this is done informally, and much so in fact, that there is little conscious awareness of the process. Teachers' informal assessments inform them about the affective features of their pupils, such as who is trying hard, who cares about the lesson, who is good classroom citizen (Airasian, 1991).

Cameron-Jones and Morrison (1973) report that comprehensive school teachers concentrated on the cognitive aspects i.e. knowledge and comprehension, to the lower levels of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy. Only eighteen per cent of what they

reported they assessed fell under the heads of application, analysis and evaluation. Colker (1984) reports from the U.S.A. that 41% of the teachers assessments, in his study, evaluated or questioned pupil comprehension, learning, thinking, knowledge, or task performance.

It is apparent from the evidence provided so far that the decision making process of teachers, particularly in the interactive context, is influenced by the judgments they make about their students' cognitions (Hoge & Coladarchi, 1989).

It is interesting what Rowntree (1991) points out, that teachers are not always totally aware of what children's characteristics they are assessing. Often they can articulate what qualities or understanding they are looking for in the student, "I'm assessing his ability to convert vulgar fractions into decimals" or "I'm interested in his attentiveness to other pupils' contributions in class." However, especially when it is assessed some predetermined quality, teachers sometimes fail to notice that they are also making and conveying judgements about other particular qualities.

> Teachers may say, for instance,: "I'm trying to assess the children's recall of the homework assignment", when it is clear to observers (from the way teachers selectively encourage and discourage, condemn and ignore children during the assessment episode) that they are also assessing compliance with their classroom rules, about shouting out answers, hand-raising, listening to others, keeping quiet when teacher speaks, avoiding local dialect, and so on. So we can have explicit and implicit assessment constructs (Rowntree, 1991 p.85).

However, Morrison (1974) found that the teachers in his study insisted that they assessed only cognitive characteristics. In line with this are the findings of Brown and McIntyre (1977), who found that teachers rarely mentioned other traits when evaluating their pupils. The teachers of the present study when they were initially asked they also said that they only assess academic aspects (chapters 8, 9).

Teachers in general, want their pupils to express respect to others, and the rules of the classroom society, and to try hard to learn what is taught. Teachers also hope that pupils will develop an interest in the teaching unit and enjoy learning about it. However, such objectives are rarely stated explicitly by the teacher or assessed with formal assessment procedures. This happens (Airasian, 1991) because first, affective objectives like interest and attitude are thought to be private, idiosyncratic behaviours. Second, affective outcomes are difficult to assess (Broadfoot, 1979), with formal approaches like paper and pencil- questionnaires, interviews, and structured observations. However, teachers notice affective behaviours in classrooms and often comment on them to individual pupils or a class as a whole.

Overall, the above evidence indicates the importance basic education teachers (primary/elementary) placed first, on the basics, and second, on children's acceptable attitudes, which reveals the underlying trend of teachers to *control* their pupils.

Findings of this study (chapter 9) show the importance that the Greek teachers placed on such cognitive and non-cognitive children's characteristics.

4.2. Process or product?

It is common to distinguish between assessing the products of work and assessing the process through which they are achieved. The concern may be in giving a grade for the finished activity after considering the finished outcome; but the concern may be more with the way it was produced, the way the children set out gathering, categorising and interpreting information (Satterly, 1989). In the first example attention will be paid to the ideas presented, the quality and quantity of work, its relevance to the subject set and to evidence of originality. In the second the concern will be on how the work was carried out, planned, executed and demonstrated (Shipman, 1983; Airasian, 1991). In one there is final assessment; in

the other assessment of on-going procedures. Process and product are intimately related- there would be no product without process. A product may fail to reveal all about the processes which produced it, although these may be recoverable through discussion with the child about the outcome (Frith and Macintosh, 1984).

However, there is evidence that most primary school teachers focus mainly on outcomes in assessment because they are concrete and often measurable. The project, the essay, the sums are specific products of methods employed. They may indicate that the methods have been mastered, but the teacher may have to guess at this (Satterly, 1989; Cassotakis, 1981; Airasian, 1991). Findings of this study also indicated that the Greek teachers studied were foccussing on children's outcomes (chapter 9). The tendency for the assessment of products to take precedence over looking at processes can be illustrated through the way continuous assessment often works out in practice. In theory this should mean that children are assessed as they work, in order that they can be guided through the feedback obtained. But it rarely works out that way: the test, or the essay tend to occur when a sequence of work has been finished. By the time the results have been given back, the children are on the next piece of work. The idea of continuous assessment is to continuously feed back useful information, but it is usually used to look at products when it is too late to be useful (Shipman, 1983).

4.3. Progressive pedagogy

Nearly a decade before the data collection of the present study a series of progressive reforms (chapter 6) were introduced in Greek compulsory education (primary and secondary, 9 years) . Hence, a consideration of the impacts that such reforms had elsewhere could assist the understanding of the study's findings.

Progressive pedagogy places emphasis on processes and pupil interests. The ORACLE project (Galton et al., 1980) concluded that a progressive primary

curriculum as characterised by the Plowden Report (1967), was not much in evidence in the schools studied between 1975-1980. Teachers seemed to use a range of teaching approaches with an emphasis on the basic skills of language and mathematics in much of their teaching. Not withstanding the apparent enthusiasm for progressive patterns of school and classroom organisation, such indications do not necessarily reflect changes in teachers' thinking or observed teaching style (Jasman, 1987). This author reports that unsurprisingly, a subject-based curriculum with little or no pupil choice which emphasised the basic skills was more associated with a traditional style of teaching. The majority of teachers tended to use a mixed style employing aspects of both approaches. Moreover, the shift in the curriculum from the basic skills and measurable outcomes to a stress on procedures might land teachers in some confusion. Findings of the present study also revealed the use of mixed styles by the majority of the teachers, as well as some confusion regarding the rationale of their practices (chapters 9, 10).

The development of the primary curriculum in England and Wales was characterised by a tension between approaches to education that began from an interest in the end result and those which focussed on the child and processes of learning. This was reflected in the debate on the nature of aims and objectives; pre-specified objectives being seen as restrictive and favouring 'products' through a content-based, basic skills curriculum. On the other hand relational aims, problem-solving objectives and expressive outcomes have been seen as enabling a process-orientated, child-centred curriculum to develop. This conflict between processes and products has been illustrated in the development of methods used to evaluate the curriculum (Tawney, 1976; Hamilton, 1976; Jasman, 1987). Two different ways of solving this difficulty have been recommended and are well explained in the debate relating to objectives and their role in clarifying the curriculum and the assessment of student learning.

Jasman (1987) suggests that schools need to be very clear about their goals, how these might be expressed and how it may be checked whether they are being achieved.

4.4. Educational Objectives

This term is used to express the particular goals of a given lesson that the pupils have to attain. Rowntree (1991) very clearly explains the concept of objectives

> By objectives we ordinarily mean the skills, abilities, knowledge and understanding in which the teacher intends that students should improve as a result of his interventions... The use of objectives is grounded in an assumption that the purpose of education is to help people change. They are to become different from what they were, developing their existing qualities and abilities, and acquiring new ones. They are to change the way they think, act and feel. They are to become knowledgeable, more skilful, more confident, more rational, more sympathetic, more insightful, more autonomous, and so on (p. 90).

Then he describes the three well known categories of objectives

> Teachers sometimes adopt a three-fold classification when talking about aims and objectives: *cognitive* aims and objectives (to do with thinking and intellectual processes), *affective* (to do with attitudes and feelings), and *psychomotor* (to do with muscular activity) (p.95).

Airasian (1991) points out that educational objectives are statements which describe the behaviours children can show after teaching. Objectives are determined by considering children's needs and available teaching resources. Often teachers do not include on a lesson plan the objectives. Of course teaching can go on without objectives but it is likely to focus on moment -to- moment activities rather than on the more important and long range issue of what pupils ought to learn from instruction. This lack of focus on pupil outcomes creates problems when a teacher tries to assess the progress of teaching and when it is completed, what pupils have learned.

> Educational objectives serve a number of important functions in the instructional process. They identify intended pupil outcomes; they provide direction for the teacher in selecting instructional activities and material; they provide the basis for assessment; they are useful reminders to the teacher of what the goals of instruction are; they help communicate to parents, pupils, administrators, and other teachers what is expected from the pupils (Airasian, 1991, p.92).

The specification of objectives was central to the development of national curriculum models. Firstly, these objectives were pre-specified and described in behavioural terms (Tyler, 1949; Bloom (ed), 1956; Mager, 1975; Taba, 1962). This facilitates the assessment of the effectiveness of a new curricular programme to be made in relation to the degree of success in achieving these objectives, as measured by summative processes at the end of teaching.

> If the teacher's aims are to help guide his practice then they should be expressed in behavioural terms; that is to say they should state what the child will actually be able to do when the aim is achieved (Ashton Keen, Davies, & Holly, 1975, p. 15).

However, planning by the pre-specification of objectives simply in behavioural terms has been seen by some to be 'most seriously disturbing' (Blenkin & Kelly, 1981) since a more goal-orientated, content curriculum was emphasised rather than the process curriculum which was being advocated in the late 1960's and early 1970's (Jasman, 1987).

Dearden (1976) argued that in the progressive primary school teachers should avoid making aims that were prescriptive of content or pupil behaviour by concerning themselves with 'relational' aims; that is, aims that focused on the child's development of a positive attitude to learning, intrinsic interests, self-expression and autonomy. Eisner (1979) also disputed the use of behavioural objectives alone in curriculum planning because

> goals are not always clear. Purposes are not always precise....many of our most productive activities take the form of exploration and play. In such activities the task is not one of arriving at a re-performed objective but rather to act, often with a sense of abandon, wonder and curiosity, out of such activities rules may be formed and objectives may be created (Eisner, 1979, p. 100).

Such activities could only be described using terms such as understanding, insight, appreciation and interest which could not be observed in behavioural terms but only inferred from the child's actions. These alternative ways of looking at educational objectives were described as 'problem-solving objectives' and 'expressing outcomes' and were seen as important adjuncts to behavioural objectives in curriculum planning and evaluation (Jasman, 1987).

Overall, the above evidence raises the very important question 'who finally has the power to determine the criteria of assessment?'

Given the Greek highly centralised education system in Greece there is a national curriculum for long time. The progressive education reforms that were introduced during the 1980-85 period (chapter 6) included a new progressive national curriculum which combined specific and relational objectives. The findings of the present study (chapters 8, 9) among others indicate how successful was this combination and the implications it had on teaching and learning.

4.5. Teachers' awareness of objectives

Another significant issue refers to teachers' perceptions about objectives and hence of whether and how clear they make them to their pupils. Morrison & McIntyre (1973) argue that much of the difficulty teachers face in assessing arises from

> teachers failing to be clear in their own minds about their educational objectives and therefore not being in the position to determine a really appropriate means of assessment (p.206).

Research suggests that teachers have to be as analytic as possible in the identification of what it is they want children to be able to do as a result of teaching This will then constitute the teaching objectives. Teachers need to think about what they are looking for in pupils in general and individually before they start teaching. However, although, some assessment goals can be specified in advance, more or less precisely; others emerge during teaching (Satterly, 1989; Rowntree, 1991).

Sometimes teachers do not assess what they assert they assess. In an essay for instance, they may want to assess pupils' creativity and using of rich vocabulary, but they assess spelling, syntax and tidiness, of the child's work. Chapter 9 presents such illustrative examples and examines the importance of the awareness of the learning objectives for the teachers and pupils of the present study.

4.6. Overview

In this chapter the content of assessments was examined. Overall, teachers believe that student achievement should be evaluated in a number of different domains, namely behaviour, attitudes, knowledge, and skills. They informally assess non-academic qualities though it is very difficult even to define them. The weight they place on different qualities, depends on the subject matter and the age-level of the pupils. Regarding learning objectives there are two trends, relational and specific ones. Typically, teachers place more emphasis on products than on the processes of children's efforts. In the primary school teachers mostly assess the lower level of the cognitive domain. There is evidence that often teachers are not clearly aware of the lesson's objectives. This shows the necessity for teachers to be conscious of what goals they are pursuing in a given teaching unit, so that to enhance their teaching effectiveness.

Chapter 9 examines which children's qualities the Greek teachers of this study were assessing; teachers' attitudes towards products or procedures of children's learning;

and how they view the role of objectives within the context of the progressive reforms and of the classroom circumstances.

The next chapter explores teachers' responses to children's efforts, positive and negative and their consequences.

CHAPTER 5: 3RD PHASE: TEACHER'S RESPONSE

Introduction

This chapter examines the nature and forms of teacher response to pupils' effort, performance, or behaviour, which could be verbal or non-verbal, positive or negative, specific or general. It is also interested in the impacts of the various kinds of responses on children's learning.

In the light of this interest the nature and the implications of feedback information, which is based on the interpretation phase is examined. This is also related to the study's questions regarding the importance of assessment, teachers' awareness of its potential, and provides evidence of current practice. Moreover, it deals with the classroom assessment's intended and unintended purposes; teacher's comments - forms and utility- and the use of assessment results.

Feedback is an inseparable part of the assessment and learning process. A deeper understanding of its significance and function will help the interpretation of the study's data. Hence, it is important to consider the nature of feedback; the forms it takes; its effects on students, and how it can be used more effectively to assist learning.

5.1. The nature and timing of feedback

Firstly, it is necessary to see what this term means. Clement and Frandsen (1976) have pointed out that despite the apparent simplicity of the concept, the literature suggests various interpretations of the term. It is therefore necessary to distinguish which one is appropriate for the teacher, and to differentiate between feedback, criticism and teacher praise. Ramaprasad, (1983) gives this definition:

> Feedback is information about the gap between the actual level and the reference level of a system parameter which is used to alter the gap in some way (p.4).

In daily classroom life teachers inform their students how far away they are from the desirable outcome. Often this information has positive or negative meaning encouraging a desirable outcome or discouraging an undesirable one. Praise and criticism reflect those two approaches.

In the classroom, feedback is provided either immediately at the end of an assessment episode, or after a longer period. Simultaneous feedback has been systematically studied in two major formats. One used non-verbal messages and the other verbal messages to provide instantaneous feedback during teaching. Most studies suggest that students need to get feedback soon after their performance has been finished. When the time between the actual performance and the provided feedback is increased its utility is decreased (Kulhavy & Anderson,1972; Kulik & Kulik 1988; Crooks, 1988).

5.2. Forms of feedback

Feedback is provided in verbal/non-verbal or written forms. The type of feedback used appears to be a function of the pupils' age-level, the purpose of the part of the lesson in which it occurs, and many other factors in addition to the response (Zahorik, 1968).

When the feedback is really intended to contribute to the students' progress it must tell them either that they have already achieved what were trying to achieve or else must enable them to take further action towards achieving it Birney (1964).

Rowntree (1977) points out the various forms and degrees of usefulness of feedback, and notes that in its least useful form it comes as a mark or grade. A 45% or a C, or 7 out of 10 may give the students some hint as to whether or not their teacher thinks they are making progress, and they can compare their grade or

mark with those of their previous tests. But of course it is very non-specific. It tells them neither what they have done to merit such a mark nor what they could do to get a better one. He writes that feedback from assessment only begins to be useful when it includes verbal comments. Even the briefest of comments e.g. "A well-argued essay in the main, but what evidence are your third and fourth conclusions based on?" can be more helpful to the students than a C or 65% if teachers want them to learn from considering their performance again in the light of teachers' reaction.

5.3. Verbal Feedback

Zahorik (1968) notes that teacher-verbal feedback is a very complex, persistent and pervasive behaviour during the teaching-learning process. It is related to several variables only one of which was the value of the pupil response. This behaviour refers to those oral remarks of teachers which reflect on the correctness of the children's solicited or initiated statements in relation to subject matter development. It includes statements such as "All right", "Fine", "Uh huh", And "That's good thinking", but it also contains other statements such as "Why did you say that?" and "Could anyone give us another point?" which provide feedback in an indirect way.

The author found that his teachers sample used a wide variety of different types of feedback, but only a comparatively small number of types were used with regularity. The most frequently used type of feedback was repeating the pupil's answer approvingly and calling for or giving a new topic for discussion. The second most frequently used type was calling on a pupil to enlarge his response. The third most frequently used type was giving simple praise-confirmation and again moving to a new topic.

5.4. Teacher praise and children's reactions

Page (1958) found that simple positive comments were beneficial, and harsh criticism is predictably counterproductive. Younger and less able students may benefit most from praise.

In a study which examined the consequences of teacher praise and criticism (Worrall, C., Worrall, N., & Meldrum, 1983) found that in general criticism was more potent than praise for bringing about change. Negative shift due to criticism was clearly greater than the positive shift due to praise.

Child (1981) argues that the place of rewards in school-praise, grades, recognition of progress- is crucial, and clearly they are used as incentives to encourage learning. Sometimes the inherent interest in some aspects of school work is sufficient to arouse the children to cognitive activity, but often it will be necessary to apply external stimuli.

Development in the area of extrinsic motivation owes much to findings in reinforcement theory, which has been one of the most researched areas of psychology (Child, 1981; Satterly, 1989). In its simplest form, the theory follows from Thordike's 'Law of Effect' which tells us that if our efforts are rewarded with something we like to receive (positive reinforcement), we are more likely to repeat our efforts, and thus habits are born. This, of course, accords with Skinner's (1969) basic principle that behaviour that is followed by positive reinforcement is likely to recur while that which is not is less likely to recur.

In primary classrooms the use of tangible reinforcers such as 'stars', prizes, money or gifts is not new, but systematic applications of a reinforcement schedule of tokens appeared in the seventies. In ordinary classrooms the idea of using extrinsic rewards which might be expensive is prohibitive. Therefore, several programmes

have been devised (Child, 1981) which start with external rewards of one kind or another (prizes, etc) and become transferred to cheap reinforcers (free time, enjoyed activities, and the like).

Although most educational psychologists stress the value of reinforcement of good behaviour or successful performance, and point to teacher praise as a valuable and desirable form of such reinforcement, Brophy (1981) drew results from his study sharply at variance with these common views. His main conclusion was that the meaning and function of teacher praise would depend not only on the verbal content, but on non-verbal accompanying behaviour which could either reinforce or contradict it, and on situation and context factors which condition student expectations about and perceptions of teacher behaviour.

There is evidence that teacher praise is a weak reinforcer at least after the first few years in school. Until they are age 7 or 8, children are very oriented toward pleasing adults, and have what Kohlberg (1969) calls a "good boy" or "good girl" sense of morality. Moreover, children who are low in ability, who came from low socioeconomic backgrounds, or who come from minority groups may be especially responsive to praise and encouragement from teachers.

Once the childish interest in pleasing adult authority figures gives place to peer-orientation or other motives, however, teacher praise usually becomes a very weak reinforcer for most students. This is especially true with respect to its potential for controlling disruptive behaviour or other unacceptable classroom performance, because pupils who were concerned about pleasing the teacher would not be behaving disruptively in the first place (Hammer, 1972; Kennedy & Willcutt, 1964; Leith & Davies, 1969; Walker, 1979).

With pupils who happen to be high achievers, praise may be not only ineffective but actually counter-productive, at least if overused (Eden, 1975). Teachers have not to be indiscriminantly positive in their evaluative comments toward students, but instead to pick their spots and choose their words carefully (Brophy, 1981).

However, effective praise can provide encouragement and support when made contingent on effort, can be informative as well as reinforcing when it directs the students' attention to genuine progress or accomplishment, and can help teachers establish friendly personal relationships with students (Forness, 1973). Although it is generally weak as a reinforcer, it is effective with many students, and for them, has several advantages over material rewards (Schultz & Sherman, 1976).

5.5 Written feedback

The extent of the written feedback (general and short; marks or grades; or specific comments) and how it affects learning are also of interest for this study.

As long ago as 1958 Page found that students who are given individualized verbal comments on their work, incorporating suggestions for improvement, do tend to improve significantly more than students who are given standard comments (e.g. "poor", "average", "good", "excellent") or grades. The author writes that when the average secondary teacher takes the time and trouble to write comments, "believed to be encouraging" on student papers, these apparently have a measurable and potent effect upon student effort, attention, or attitude.

Other research has supported Page's (1958) theory that teachers' comments are a worthwhile instructional practice (Tyler, 1958; Campbell and Stanley, 1963; Pickup & Antony, 1968). Several studies attempted to replicate Page's study. However, his findings about comment effectiveness has failed to find consistent support within

the research literature (Graig, Mehrens, & Clarizio, 1975; Gage & Berliner, 1975; Glock, 1971; Lindgren, 1967).

Stewart and White (1976) presented the results of their own study and reviewed those of 12 others attempting to replicate Page's (1958) study of the effects of grades alone versus the effects of grades and teacher comments as forms of feedback. They reached a slightly less confident conclusion, pointing out that the positive effect obtained by Page may depend on the particular learning conditions and the nature of the teacher comments. They concluded rather cautiously that first, there is no strong evidence to suggest that any type of comment retains its effectiveness over an extended period of time or if administered on more than one occasion. Second, there is no consistent evidence for such effectiveness at the elementary or secondary school level; and third, where comments were effective, they were encouraging and personalized in nature rather than simple standard statements.

Cardelle and Corno (1985) found that written praise has a positive effect but it is considerably more effective when accompanied by specific comments on errors. This finding confirms the usefulness of teachers' comments on student work. Krampen (1987) suggests that written comments should be content specific and take into account a student's concept of his or her own competence, otherwise the findings show that teacher comments produce outcomes which may not be all positive.

5.6. Non-Verbal feedback

This sort of feedback abounds in primary classrooms. The teacher's smiles or scowls can have a great influence on the student's behaviour (Birney 1964; Argyle, 1978). Gesture is the commonest form of non-verbal contact. It includes facial and body movements. Jackson and Belford (1965) observing elementary school

teachers concluded that they were continually assessing, and as a consequence were changing teaching styles and curriculum after close attention to the faces of the children. The joy of teaching came through the light in the eyes of the pupils. That light provided the feedback required for instantaneous re-planning.

> A clenched fist, bared teeth, frown, tongue out, stamping feet in a tantrum, voice intonation, all assist in revealing the mood of a person. Sometimes gestures accompany and interplay with verbal communication, adding emphasis or purpose to what is being said... It has been argued that gestures are much more revealing in their psychological meaning than the speech which goes with them (Child, 1986, p. 182).

Much of classroom assessment is instantaneous and spontaneous. As Shipman (1983) put it:

> Teachers assess through their ability to detect understanding and bewilderment, enthusiasm and boredom, minority and majority understanding. Sometimes it is assessment based on answers given, but it can be through the light in the eyes of the children, the waxing and waning of enthusiasm. As the teacher interprets signs from the children there is an immediate curriculum development, changes in teaching style, emphasis, speed or topic (p.2).

Reward and punishment sound very grand terms in the primary school situation for mostly they are small things like a smile or the raising of an eyebrow. Nevertheless, their function is important, namely, to enable the teacher to control the behaviour of the children (Roberts, 1983; Child, 1986).

5.7. Feedback for learning

Sadler (1989) very clearly points out that feedback is a key element in classroom assessment. When teachers study the assessment results they can provide individuals, groups or class with feedback information in terms of where, what and how they need to improve or practice. This is a very important issue because it acts as a motivation for further learning as well, (Sutton, 1985; Jones & Bray, 1986; Dimitropoulos, 1989; Lee, 1989; Cassotakis, 1981; Thomas 1990; Airasian, 1991;

Gipps, 1990). Rowntree (1991) stresses the value of providing useful feedback to students:

> Feedback, or 'knowledge of results', is the life-blood of learning. Having said or done something of significance-whether a physical action, a comment in conversation, or an essay in an examination-the student wants to know how it is received. He wishes to know whether he communicated what he intended to communicate, whether what he said seemed right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate, useful or irrelevant to his audience. And he may need a response fairly rapidly if it is to confirm or modify his present understanding or approach. Effective feedback enables the student to identify his strengths and weaknesses and shows him how to improve where weak or build upon what he does best (p.24).

Research that examined the effects of feedback on learning from text was reviewed by Kulhavy (1977). He reports that feedback generally increased what students learned from reading assignments that included questions or tests for them to answer. Research on feedback on learning from classroom teaching has produced similar findings on the effectiveness of feedback (Beeson, 1973; Ingenkamp, 1986; Karraker, 1967; Page, 1958; Strang & Rust, 1973).

Zahorik (1968) argues that teacher-verbal feedback is significant instructional behaviour which has considerable effect on student's learning. The verbal feedback that teachers give following a student's behavioural output provides information for the child relative to the effectiveness of the behavioural output. Using this information students can adjust and change their future output in terms of their goal.

Leauby and Atkinson (1989) found that one potentially useful way of enhancing motivation and learning may be the placement of comments on students' test papers. They write that although comments alone did not significantly affect performance, they did have a significant effect, depending on the student's relative position in the class. Comments had a more powerful effect for the students at the

upper and lower positions of the class; for the middle range of students, comments had an inhibiting effect.

Radecki and Swales (1988) found that most of their ESL students reported positive or at least neutral reactions upon receiving a heavily marked paper, whatever the nature of the markings. They declared that they would read the comments and even expressed satisfaction that their teacher had marked their papers. Most of the students also reported that they looked first at the grade on their returned paper rather than the comments, implying that initially the grade is of more concern to them. Furthermore, nearly all students revealed that they review their corrected work only once or twice, immediately upon receiving it or before an examination. Natriello (1987) argues that because feedback is often given publicly, it may have effects on other students as well.

The major benefit from feedback reported by Kulhavy (1977) is the identification of errors of knowledge and understanding, and assistance with correcting those errors. In most studies, such feedback clearly improved subsequent performance on similar tasks (Crooks, 1988). Students use feedback to monitor the strengths and shortcomings of their performance, so that aspects linked with success or high quality can be recognised and strengthened, and wrong aspects reduced or corrected (Sadler, 1989).

The most effective form of feedback will depend on the correctness of the answer, the student's degree of confidence in the answer, and the nature of the task (Block & Anderson, 1975; Phye, 1979; Fredericksen, 1984b).

It is the comment in conjunction with a letter grade which would be more likely to improve student performance (Hammer, 1972; Stewart and White, 1976). However, in the light of the 12 replications of the Page study that Stewart and

White (1976) reviewed, they wonder if writing comments on papers would be a worthwhile use of teaching time.

5.8. Feedback on teaching

Classroom assessment provides feedback to the teacher as to whether the learning objectives have been reached (Jones & Bray 1986). Teachers get feedback about how well they have taught, and then plan their teaching and remedial activities on the basis of that feedback (Sutton, 1985; Dimitropoulos, 1989; Cassotakis, 1981; Black and Broadfoot, 1982; Wilson 1989; Sadler, 1989; Airasian, 1991; Gipps, 1990). Rowntree (1991), puts it in this way:

> ... as the assessment data reveal strengths and weaknesses in the student's learning, the teacher may be able to identify where he has failed to explain a new concept, confused an issue, given insufficient practice, and so on. Knowing where and how his students have had difficulty may enable him how to teach so as to remedy the situation (p. 27).

Results of individual children can provide feedback to the teacher about both the child's progress and teacher's success (Black and Broadfoot, 1982; Satterly, 1989; Gipps 1990). Frequent information about student performance is used as a basis for the design of teaching materials (Glaser, 1971; Lee, 1989; Thomas, 1990).

5.9. Significance of feedback

Among the reasons which Harlen (1978) identifies for assessment is to gather information about a wide range of pupil characteristics as feedback for making decisions. Moreover, to provide information from which teachers can obtain insights into their own effectiveness.

Sadler (1989) indicates that feedback helps students to develop self-assessment skills, if the teacher provides detailed remedial advice and the student follows it through. This however, maintains the learner's dependence on the teacher. The

alternative approach is for students to develop skills in evaluating the quality of their work, especially during the process of production. The transition from teacher-supplied feedback to learner self-monitoring is not something that comes out automatically.

Frequent grading and comprehensive assessment of pupils' work provide feedback information to the pupils as to how well they are doing in relation to others and in comparison to their own past performance (Rowntree, 1991).

Crooks (1988) stresses that feedback in the form of global grades or simply confirming correct answers has little effect on subsequent performance. Instead of the vague, implicit and incomplete criteria that teachers frequently use or an emphasis on neatness, conduct or encouragement which diverts vital intellectual feedback, students need clear and explicit performance criteria which explain what they are expected to do. He also points out the significance of feedback in improving learning through the affective domain.

Bennet, Desforges, Cockburn, & Wilkinson, (1984) emphasise the importance of feedback that highlights what a student can do to remedy unsatisfactory results. However, this is a skill which many teachers find difficult, because of the large numbers of children they teach, their own unfamiliarity with formative assessment approaches and the restrictions of curricular demands, time and resources. The findings of this study (chapters 8,9) reveal how far the teachers were aware of the significance of feedback and whether they used it effectively to assist teaching and learning.

5.10 Towards a better use of feedback

Educators who work on this development suggest that to get the best results of the situation the learner has to:

> (a) possess a concept of the *standard* (or goal, or reference level) being aimed for, (b) compare the *actual* (or current) *level of performance* with the standard, and (c) engage in appropriate *action* which leads to some closure of the gap. (Sadler, 1989, p.121)

Schunk (1984), suggests that with performance feedback the emphasis should be on informing students about their progress in mastery, rather than on social comparison. This is crucial for the less able students, who might otherwise receive little positive feedback. Teachers need to be knowledgeable about the effects of various types of feedback and should consciously provide appropriate criticism. In addition, students can be trained to give helpful feedback to their peers. While positive oral feedback seems to be best, written feedback can be positive or negative as long as it is specific and impersonal (Book, 1985).

Black, Devine, and Turner, (1989) suggested that teachers have always to provide maximum feedback to children about their assessments, by relating subsequent teaching to those assessments, or by making clear which qualities have been discerned and achieved and where still effort is needed.

5.11. Meaning and use of assessment results

Crucial decisions on students' progress are based on results of assessments. A mark or grade is the most common form of feedback, and it carries a heavy load of meaning. Children need to know how the mark was awarded, and for what. Although most teachers believe in the utility of assessment as feedback to pupils, they do not routinely explain the meaning of the assessment results they give. Many teachers give marks or grades without comment to individual pupils, they use different criteria on different occasions and several different bases of comparison

may be used in arriving at grades. Often pupils are not told, for instance, whether an essay is being marked mainly for narrative development or for grammatical accuracy (Clough et al., 1984). Some teachers do not explain that this week a homework mark is awarded by comparison with last week's one, whereas on another occasion individual performances are compared to the rest of the group.

5.12. Grading

Marking and grading are common aspects of the assessment process in primary classrooms. Their forms and role are particularly interesting for the present study, because in Greece they are subject to frequent official changes (chapter 6). These changes, not surprisingly, caused some confusion to teachers and resulted in application of different grading approaches, 'assessment styles', based on different perspectives (chapters 8, 9, 10). Thus, the literature evidence will aid the interpretation of the investigated teachers' grading practices and beliefs.

Grading is the process of judging the quality of a pupil's work or performance. It is the process by which scores and descriptive evidence are converted into marks or letters, i.e. grades, which indicate how well each child has learned (Airasian, 1991). Grades are a traditional and nearly universal means of documenting pupil achievement. In order to grade a teacher has to compare a pupil's performance to some group or standard, for instance how the peers have done, or how many items were correctly answered out of the total.

Although pupils and parents place a substantial significance on grades (Rowntree, 1977; Cassotakis, 1981; Avdali, 1989) few teachers have had formal training for it (Hills, 1981). Grades are formal, permanent, public, and important elements of a pupil's school record. Grading is a difficult task for teachers because they wish to be objective, fair to all pupils treating them the same way. Since a primary teacher

knows each child very well, and the real problems it might face, this makes the objectivity of the grading difficult (Airasian, 1991).

The potential of grading and marking for the improvement or inhibition of child's learning and development was the theme for long debates in Greece (Tsiboukis, 1984; Avdali, 1989; Bouzakis, 1993; Chiotakis, 1993) and elsewhere (Frith & Macintosh, 1984; Airasian, 1991) which in turn reflects the importance of the issue.

5.12.1 Grading forms

A serious difficulty which teachers face is to find the best way to communicate children's progress in an effective and meaningful manner to the interested parties. Since parents and pupils and most of the public are well aware of the grading scales (1-10), (1-20), letter scales (A,B,C); descriptive scales, (excellent, very good, satisfactory, adequate); or (pass-fail), many education systems use such scales to communicate children's progress (Gronlund 1976; Hills, 1981, Airasian, 1991).

5.12.2. Grading purposes

Proponents of grading argue that in primary school it serves three wider purposes, administrative, informational, and motivational (Airasian, 1991). Schools use grades administratively to determine pupils' rank in class, credits for graduation, and suitability for promotion to the next level (Tsiboukis, 1979; Airasian, 1991). Informationally, grades are used to inform parents, pupils, and others about a pupil's performance. Grades summarize how well the children mastered the material taught during a term or a session (Rowntree, 1977; Avdali, 1989; Airasian, 1991). Grades are also used to motivate pupils to study (Tsiboukis, 1979; Avdali, 1989; Airasian, 1991; Chiotakis, 1993).

Except for serving as a measure of achievement, grades are an important medium for communicating with parents and within the schools, and they form a cummulative record of student progress. Information about students' successes and failures and the problems children face, can be used by parents to cooperate with the teacher and to support and encourage their children where they need it (Tsiboukis, 1979; Wright and Wiese, 1988; Avdali, 1989; Airasian, 1991).

Grades are the overt criterion for the evaluation of the curricula in a national, local, school, or class level (Gipps, 1990). They are used for comparisons to estimate the extent of attaining the educational objectives. Finally, grades are used as the basic information to guide and counsult students for future studies, and career selection (Fragos, 1984).

Grading is an index of curriculum and teaching success. If teachers for instance, give a test after a teaching session, having marked it they quickly get a comprehensive picture of how well they have taught. Grades are more useful when are accompanied with specific teacher comments about the strengths and weaknesses of pupil's work (Page, 1958; Stewart & White, 1976; Avdali, 1989).

5.12.3. Dispute of grading

Much of the criticism of assessment is aimed at the grading system. The side-effects usually blamed on grades regard the unfairness, standardization, competition, extrinsic rewards. Information is lost, because grades don't tell all that is known about the students performance or abilities (Rowntree, 1991).

Ebel (1982) discusses the issue of marking and argues that there are problems like the lack of a commonly accepted definition of what represents a mark; that often marks are used as a means of reward, or sanctions, so that some times marking becomes a vehicle of injustice instead of fairness.

Sometimes teachers write long specific comments on pupils' work. Such comments are more illuminating than a mark or grade or percentage label. However, when teachers grade the product they will keep such insights for themselves. Hence, the pupils do not get feedback of a sort that might help them learn from the teacher's response to their work. Important information and features differentiating one pupil from another are omitted. In addition, pupils may get the same mark though they may have tackled different problems in different ways (Bouzakis, 1993; Chiotakis, 1993).

Makrinioti (1982) reports that in some Greek primary classrooms grades were a 'weapon' in teachers' hands, and that teachers foster their pupils the conception of grades as symbolic rewards in order to direct, control and motivate their activities and behaviour.

However, there exist problems with grading approaches that suggest caution when using grades for decision making. Among other limitations, Thorndike (1969) points out that grades often lack reliability, which makes meaningful comparisons across classes or schools difficult. He also notes that teachers use grades ineffectively and that grades are an inadequate means of communication. Such difficulties appear mostly at the elementary schools where grading systems use peer performance as a frame for reference and result in letter or number categories. The normative performance of previous pupils is the most meaningful standard in generating grades; however, this standard usually consists of an imprecise standard developed through teacher experience (Hopkins & Stanley, 1981; Wright & Wiese, 1988).

Opponents of grading criticise the abuse of grades as a punishment, because pupils had not studied or because they do not obey the classroom and school's rules. Moreover, they dispute grading because it acts as rewarding by giving grades for

rote learning, and fostering the children competitive and grade-hunting attitudes. Of course there is always the subjective dimension in giving grades (Papastamatis, 1988; Avdali, 1989; Chiotakis, 1993).

Although motivation may be enhanced when performance is high, it may also be diminished when a grade is lower than the pupil expected (Airasian, 1991). Frequent failures inhibit the joy that is related to learning; they limit the demands one puts for him/herself, students have doubts for their abilities and they are not confident (Chiotakis, 1993; Fragoudaki, 1987).

Christiani, (1989) argues that grades have not objectivity, comparativity and informative validity. Arguments in favour of this view assert that: pupils with different attainments get the same grade, or the same attainment is evaluated differently at different classes, schools, even from the same teacher; how good or poor a student is depends upon the quality of the class. In a class with many high ability pupils grading is more rigorous than in a class with less able students; a grade cannot reveal the ability of attainment, neither the process of attaining. Grades can evaluate writing, reading or arithmetic, but they cannot measure social and affective qualities, such as imagination, creativity, responsibility, leadership, innovation, etc.

Grades foster the children the view that they study the subject material in order not to learn, but to get the grade, since a 'good' grade provides respect from peers and parents, and society (Vouyioukas, 1985).

Grades make pupils winners and loosers. The former are approved of and encouraged the latter are disapproved of and discouraged. Hence, the good become better and the poor worse. Grades create an atmosphere of competition instead of cooperation (Crooks, 1988).

Broadfoot, (1992) reports that in France apart from the lack of genuinely formative assessment and guidance, a consideration of teacher assessment reveals the predominance of numerical marks despite widespread recognition that they are unconstructive and difficult to interpret (Bottin, 1991) because of the lack of objectives and criteria.

The Inspectors, (IGEN), suggest that there should be an improvement in the precision of assessment objectives so that students, teachers and policy-makers can understand and use them and an increase in the number of methods of assessment used (Broadfoot, 1992).

Overall, grading systems are characterised by subjectivity, lack of validity, and lack of reliability. Finally, grading is not a dependable prognostic means (Bouzakis, 1993).

5.12.4. Grading in Greek primary classrooms

The grading dispute is reflected in the different approaches found in Greek primary classrooms, in this and other studies. Papastamatis (1988), for instance, found that most Greek primary teachers of his study favoured traditional assessment approaches, such as testing and marking, despite the fact that such methods were either discouraged or had been officially abolished. Responses to the questionnaire of the above study indicated that (30%) of the teachers were assigning a grade to pupils' work. Marking was the only area where the percentage was low. Many teachers reported that they did not mark children's work because of the official education policy. In the interviews however, about (74%), said that they were in favour of marking because it motivates children to learn. These findings can be explained in terms of the Greek culture where families have high aspirations for their children (Laskou-Nasiakou, 1977) particularly for academic success

(Dragonas, 1983; Georgiou-Nielsen, 1980; Katakis, 1978). Findings of the present study indicate the same trend regarding Greek teachers grading (chapters 8, 9, 10).

Bouzakis (1993) identified four trends as far as grading in Greek primary schools is concerned. The first trend reflects those teachers who suggest abolition of grades. The second includes those who recommend the simplification of the grading scale, for instance, to have only pass-fail in assessment. Those of the third trend do not agree with the current grading approaches. However, they would not prefer the abolition of grading, but the adoption of a differential grading system using standard criteria. The final trend advocates a descriptive-detailed assessment, not only for the two first age-levels but for all.

Bouzakis' (1993) findings are in line with the different assessment styles which this study identified in Greek primary classrooms (chapter 10).

5.12.5. A need for better practices

The previous debate constitutes strong evidence that marking and grading never can be totally fair since these approaches can only deal with limited and specific areas of school work and of the pupils by the teacher (Lemlech, 1984; Alexander, 1984). Hence, better practices for evaluating children's performance and work are needed.

One approach suggested by Dowling and Dauncey, (1984) would be talking about the matters which arise with the child immediately, suggesting a redraft, or encouraging the children themselves to write in evaluative comments or notes for future reference.

Some schools in the USA prefer parent-teacher conferences or the use of descriptive, criterion-referenced evaluation instead of the traditional report (Lemlech, 1984). In the U.K. many schools are moving towards more informative

and open-ended ways of assessing pupils' progress which emphasise pupils' achievements (RoAs), rather than deficiencies and avoid rank orderings (Broadfoot, 1987a; Reid, Bullock, and Howarth, 1988; Pollard et al., 1994).

Airasian (1991) suggests that teachers have to take the grading process seriously and to devise a system of grading that suits their purposes and that provides a fair and valid picture of a pupil's performance on a well-defined grading criteria.

5.13. Overview

This chapter explored the concepts of feedback and grading. Feedback was defined as information indicating the gap between the desirable goal and the current level of a student. It is useful for both the teacher and the student. It appears in verbal, non-verbal and written forms. It might be immediate or delayed. Specific comments are more useful than general descriptors, grades or marks. Praise seems to be favourable for younger children and low achievers. Feedback is of most value when it refers to an individual's own progress. Students need to get specific comments and help to identify their errors and guidance on how to correct them.

Despite the limitations inherent in grades, it is important to understand that grades are potent symbols in our society, symbols that count for pupils, parents, and the general public. That is why they are used in many countries. Chapters (8,9,10) present the perspective of the Greek teachers of the study regarding the way they understand and use feedback and grading in the classroom.

The next chapter deals with the Greek education system and the assessment evolution in Greek primary education. It aims to describe the educational, social, and historical context within which the present study was carried out. This could help the reader to understand the findings, and explain the Greek teachers' practices and views.

CHAPTER 6: THE GREEK EDUCATION SYSTEM

Introduction

In this chapter, firstly the Greek social context, the education system and its reforms, are briefly described. Secondly, the role which several crucial factors play within the education system is examined. Factors such as teachers and their training, administration, textbooks, curricula, educational policy, planning and implementing agents are examined separately and the connections among them, in order to understand how they interact and perhaps influence classroom assessment matters.

6.1. A word on the social context

The creation of an independent Greek state in 1830 led the country to turn both to its own history and to western sources for a guide in the development of education theory and practice. The Greeks are heir to two stupendous traditions, those of Byzantium and of ancient Hellas. Constantinople for about 1,000 years was the centre of the Greek nation. Greeks have homogeneity of language, of religion (Christians Orthodox), and of nationality. This homogeneity rests on the three pillars, of an ancient culture, a cohesive religion and a deep attachment to family life. Parents are devoted to the upbringing of their children and try to do the best to fulfil their parental duties particularly for academic success. Education is regarded as a means of advancement, and educational qualifications are highly desired, and competed for by all possible means (Laskou-Nasiakou, 1977; Dragonas, 1983; Georgiou-Nielsen, 1980; Katakis, 1978).

6.2. The framework of the Greek education system

The structural origins of the current Greek education can be traced to 1834, when a basic law on primary education was published which was fundamentally an adaptation of the French Law of 1833, the (*Loi Guizot*) with minor amendments.

The influence of the German concept for education was also transplanted in Greece, i.e. idealistic principles, based on Greek humanism allied with nationalism and controlled by a centralized service (Dimaras, 1978).

In spite of a series of educational reforms, elements of the above imported education systems are still found in the present education structure. In the two last decades Greece has made substantial efforts to revitalize its educational system in order to meet the needs of a rapidly changing society.

A constitutional provision (article 16, 1975) of the current Greek constitution, and two important pieces of legislation (Law 309 and 576) enacted in 1976 and 1977 altered the organisational and instructional framework of the school system. The Government followed the international trends in western Europe by providing a common school for all children without any selection up to the end of the compulsory education.

6.3. Reforms 1981-1986

The education system for general education, in the time of carrying out this study, is based upon the legislation mentioned above and on recent reforms enacted between 1981 to 1986. There are three levels: Primary (pre-school and primary schools), secondary (lower secondary, gymnasium and upper secondary, lyceum) and higher (non-university and university levels). Pre-primary education, *nepiagogeio*, for one- or two- year education, remains optional and is provided free of charge for children 3 1/2 to 5 1/2 years olds. Primary education includes six year-levels. Upon completing primary school, pupils are enroled automatically in the three-year compulsory gymnasium.

In the light of the *progressive* movement and ideas which prevailed in Europe in 70s and 80s (Jasman, 1987), Greek socialist governments (1981-1990) attempted

some radical reforms. New progressive curricula were introduced based on the progressive values of democracy, equal opportunities, child-centered pedagogy, and in general the educational care for the cultivation of children's entire personalities, according to their individual differences. Thus, some new subjects added such as civil relationships and the study of the environment. New textbooks were issued as well as teacher's manuals for each subject and every year-level.

Moreover, the abolition of the Inspectorate and its replacement with that of the school adviser, *scholikos symvoulos* was widely welcomed by the primary teachers. With the same enthusiasm, they welcomed the upgrading of teacher initial training from 2-year studies in the Pedagogical Academies, to 4-year studies at university level. These reforms included teacher inservice training by the establishment of regional inservice training centres. Finally, the establishment of the educational planning and research institution, *Pedagogiko Instituto,* and the provisions for parents involvement in the school life, as well as some provision for special education, were the major changes introduced (Law, 1566, 1985).

For this study it is interesting to explore to what extent the recent reforms are eventually implemented and evaluated in the classroom. Investigator's field notes from classroom observations, informal discussions with teachers, and pupils, with the questionnaire responses might offer an indication to the issue (chapters 8,9). Succeeding sections examine the role of some factors which directly or indirectly influence classroom assessment procedures. These include: the administration, the curriculum, textbooks, and teacher training.

6.4. Administration: centralized control

It was considered important by the researcher to explore the role of centralised educational administration in Greece, and what impact it might exert, directly or indirectly, upon teaching style and on pupils' development. It was assumed that the

system's centralised structure might influence primary teachers' perspectives, attitudes, behaviour and in turn their assessment practices. In order to estimate how much influence the educational system exerts upon teacher assessment practices and decision making, the study's questionnaire included relevant items asking teachers to indicate the degree of influence and restrictions they felt administration exercises on their assessment practices (chapter 8). Moreover, this influence was studied through classroom observations (chapter 9), discussing with teachers and pupils, and by studying official documents, and relevant studies.

Administration is considered here as the operational framework of the educational system and as the channel through which a ruling government attempts to implement its policies and to gauge and police their implementation.

The system is centralised, to a great degree resulting in curriculum and teaching style conformity (Dimaras, 1978; Mavrogiorgos, 1988). This highly centralised system is sometimes described as analogous with the French (Broadfoot, 1992) education system. Central control in Greek education extends from matters of general policy to details of everyday classroom practices, from the imposition of uniform curricula to the establishment of a one book per subject per year-level system (Makrinioti, 1982; Mavrogiorgos, 1988).

Educational policy and control of schools and teachers flows from the Ministry of Education. The curriculum, textbooks, teaching methods, teacher salaries, and the general entrance examinations for the universities all are determined by the minister of education (Makrinioti, 1982; Massialas, Flouris, & Cassotakis, 1988).

The number of subjects taught at each year-level, the class time allocated to them, their teaching objectives and the particular topics to be covered during the school

year are included in directives issued by the government in the form of presidential decrees.

Moreover, the ministry of education certifies and appoints primary teachers to specific districts. It is mandatory for all state school teachers to teach for at least two years in rural areas. Besides, the ministry of education exerts considerable control over financial issues. Budget proposals are submitted to the ministry and approved by it on an annual basis (Persianis, 1978).

Under the decentralization attempts of the PASOK socialist government (1981-1990), new guide-lines were given to local agencies so that wider participation by the people in educational decision-making was possible. For example, the local community educational council introduced to the local authorities, (municipals), issues pertaining to education and the distribution of funds. Each prefecture had a prefectural council of education which studies and introduces to the prefectural council educational matters, based on recommendations from the municipal or community educational councils. On the national level, a National Council on Education was established to provide overall guidance on educational matters (Massialas et al., 1988).

The French government has recently sought to introduce similar progressive decentralization measures aiming, according to (Broadfoot et al., 1993) to provide more effective control and curriculum development.

One might assume that centralisation has the advantage that the government can introduce major reforms throughout the system despite any opposition. Moreover, that the education system is perhaps, much easier to implement nationwide policies and evaluate them in order to keep national standards, than a more decentralised system (Dimaras, 1978).

It is obvious that in such a system there is little room, if any, for teachers to exercise their autonomy in decision making about how to teach (Mavrogiorgos, 1988).

However, centralisation often operates towards the opposite direction, i.e. by blockading and rejecting any initiatives stemming from the basis of the system, individual schools and teachers (Broadfoot, 1992). Besides, because the government controls the system so strictly and prescribes all educational activities in detail, it can be argued that it might create lazy teachers (Papastamatis, 1988) who just follow the instructions, without thinking for change and improvement.

There are several similar national models of centralized education systems, which vary in organization pattern and power allocation, such as in France (Broadfoot et al., 1994), Cyprus, Malta, Portugal, Spain, Luxemburg, and Poland (International Year-book of Education, 1986).

In the case of France, it is worth noting findings of the comparative study (Broadfoot et al., 1993) concerning English and French teachers' professional perspectives. They found among others that centralisation is not necessarily equitable with effective control since central control is hard to 'police'. According to these authors the fact that there is a great deal more homogeneity of practice in France than in England was found to be not primarily a result of directives or coercion, but of the ideology of teachers themselves.

Considering the above selection of countries with centralised education system, it becomes clear how important education is for them; thus, they attempt with every means to control its operation for the purpose to impose their policies and indirectly the prevailing ideology:

Presidential decrees which are issued by the suggestion of the Greek Minister of education deal with a number of issues which concern:

a. The organization and function of primary schools
e. The syllabuses for each grade, the weekly time-tables and the analytical curricula
f. Students' assessment, the school life organization and the overall framework of school activities, and
g. Every other detail relevant to the function of primary schools (Law 1566, 1985, 11, g).

The above extract makes very clear the government's intention to exert absolute control and power in every aspect of primary education in order to implement as full as possible its educational policies.

Law 1304/1982 established the body of the Regional Educational Directorate, *Proistamenos*, charged with management, administrative and disciplinary duties of schools in their regions. The same Law abolished the 'Inspectorate' and introduced the institution of the school adviser, *scholikos symvoulos*, who has undertaken the commitment of providing guidance to teachers in educational matters regarding curriculum, teaching methods, and pedagogy. School advisers are experienced teachers with additional qualifications.

6.5. Educational Policy

Mavrogiorgos (1986), argued that educational policy is a subcategory of the broader social and economic policy, which could be defined as a cluster of general principles and rules been legislated by the state for the planning, designing and implementation of measures and procedures aiming to attain educational objectives through school mechanisms. One has to bear in mind however, that school itself is a conservative and rigid institution which hardly accepts reforms. An authoritarian and highly centralised system of educational administration such as the Greek one, reinforces more this inflexibility of school. Classroom teachers in particular, accept

with much scepticism every idea for innovation because they feel insecure about their new roles and identity (Dimaras, 1978; Broadfoot et al., 1993).

The principal means to implement the policy are mainly the teachers, the curricula, the textbooks and the school advisers (Law 1566, 1985).

Law (1566, 1985) founded the Pedagogical Institute, *Pedagogiko Instituto*, an agency with many responsibilities for planning and regulating the education system, organising education research and evaluating the system. Under the absolute control of the minister of education, it becomes clear that it could be used by the government to offer scientific cover for predetermined policies. The Institute has the responsibility for writing books for teachers and pupils. Books are prescribed and they must fulfil some preconditions (Makrinioti, 1982; Mavrogiorgos, 1993).

6.6. Educational aims

In general, the traditional aim of Greek formal education was national stability, not development. The maintenance of a conservative curriculum placing emphasis on classical and traditional studies, is seen as promoting the Hellenic homogeneity of the nation, and is in line with both entrenched academic opinion and bureaucracy conservation (Kazamias, 1978).

Equality of opportunity was the consistent objective of every Greek education system (Dimaras, 1978; Gotovos, Mavrogiorgos, Papakostantinou, 1983; Mavrogiorgos, 1985) although in practice it belonged more to the ideal than to reality. Some measures in this direction (Law, 309, 1976) was the extension of compulsory schooling from six to nine years, free lessons, free books at all school levels of education, free transport for pupils living in remote areas, the confirmation of *demotike* as the instruction language and the new system of admission to universities (OECD, 1982).

In the current Constitution of 1975 it is stressed that the aims of education are: the intellectual, ethical, vocational and physical training of the people; the creation of national and religious identity; and the development of self-sufficient and responsible citizens.

The main goals of the official educational policy during the period (1981-1990) were to seek out and cultivate the creative abilities and talents of young people. To prepare them systematically to carry out the development of the country and ensuring its progress, in a responsible way, with critical understanding and mainly to educate socially conscious citizens equipped appropriately with adequate scientific and technical expertise, to face the demands of the 21st century (Law 1566, 1985).

6.7. Primary education: aims, operation

The aim of primary education (Law, 1566, 1985) is to contribute towards a multifaced harmonious and balanced development of the intellectual and psycho-physical abilities of pupils, so that, independently of sex and social origin, they have the possibility to develop into an integrated personality and live creatively. All these were in close connection with the socialist movements and the democratic ideas for equal opportunities, which swept western Europe in 70s and 80s (Jasman, 1987). It is of interest to examine the effect these ideas had had on teachers, in terms of beliefs, attitudes and behaviour, how they interpreted them in classroom practices, and how these ideas influenced classroom assessments (chapters 8, 9, 10).

The school year extends from September 10 to June 10 with a break of two weeks at Christmas and another two weeks at Easter holidays. Primary education is available throughout the country, even in the smallest and more remote village,

subject only to the legal requirement that there is a minimum enrolment of 15 pupils.

Only about 84 per cent of schools enjoy sole occupancy of premises; elsewhere buildings are shared by two, three or more schools. Even when a school is the sole occupant, its size may be such that shift working is necessary. There seems to be little regional variation in provision for the required deployment of teachers corresponds broadly with the distribution of population, 36 per cent of posts being in greater Athens and Salonica. In the area of primary sector the proportions of state and private schools are 93 per cent state and 7 per cent private. However, above this level the private establishments account for about 25 per cent of the total of secondary schools (Massialas et al., 1988).

The curriculum and syllabus are uniform throughout state schools and in practice most private establishments follow suit. Primary school attendance is compulsory spread over six years, ages (5 1/2 - 11 1/2). Pupils are grouped according to age only. No grouping according to ability or other criterion takes place. The school is comprehensive throughout the year-levels in the whole country. Primary school units vary from being single-teacher, in some rural schools, to establishments with up to 15 teachers, at urban or suburban schools, based on an average of 30 pupils per teacher. The programme of studies for each type of school is the same with exception in one- or two-teacher schools, where pupils of different grades and age groups have to be taught together and the so-called 'silent work' is necessary.

6.8. National Curriculum

Among the channels through which educational authorities exert control over teachers' activities the curriculum occupies a central place. The curriculum in this context is considered as a social, historical, and cultural product interwoven with the social fabric that sustains it (Hooper, 1971). What is thought to constitute the

'formal corpus of school knowledge' the 'legitimate' knowledge we must all have, is directly related to economic and social institutions (Apple, 1979). Teachers are the institutional and commonly accepted agents who are transmitting and communicating this body of knowledge on which they have no control.

Within the Greek system, the educational authorities and mainly the ministry of education are the ones who plan, organise and decide what is to be valued as knowledge to be taught and mastered; the outcome of their decision is actively expressed in the form of the curriculum. It has to be stressed that not only the aims, objectives and learning experiences offered by the curriculum are entirely governed by the ministry, but also the content and internal structure of each topic are also prescribed. Therefore, all materials used for the transmission of the curriculum (textbooks, teaching methods employed, teaching hours per subject weekly, teacher manual, and the like), all these are elements upon which the ministry exercises absolute control (Starida, 1990). Hence, the uniformity encountered in Greek primary classrooms, the rigidity and prevention of any element of innovation or deviation from the officially defined and explicitly stated curriculum tend to constitute mechanisms which control the teacher as an individual both in the school and in the classroom (Makrinioti, 1982; Papastamatis, 1988).

No matter how successfully teachers manage to attach a personal and original 'flavour' to the role they will adopt and perform in their class, they still have no control over the knowledge they transmit (Starida, 1990).

All children of the same age are exposed to the same material irrespective of their individual differences. Primary teachers teach all subjects though some, such as music, physical education and foreign languages are taught by specialists teachers from the secondary sector.

The mandatory countrywide curricula tend to be academic and traditional, and throughout the system no departure from them is permitted for state schools. The latter is a very important directive connected directly with assessment since classroom teachers obviously have to comply with the curriculum objectives.

What follows presents extracts from the Education Act (Law 1556, 1985, cl. 3.a) regarding the Greek national curricula for primary school, which are closely related to the present study. The national curricula provide complete guide-lines of the educational operation and mainly consist of:

aa) clearly articulated objectives for each course within the framework of the general and specific aims of education for each level
b) syllabuses which are formulated according to the aims of each course at each level and the daily programme
cc) suggestive directions concerning the teaching method and the means that may be used for the presentation of each unit or subject.

The weekly aggregate hourly allocation of taught subjects for all year-levels is depicted in table 1.

Table 1. Weekly timetable per subject taught for all year levels

Modern Greek Language	52
Mathematics	22
Environmental Studies	14
Religious Education	8
History	8
Physics	6
Civil Education	2
Geography	2
Aesthetic Education	20
Physical Education	12

Source: Ministry of Education, 1984.

6.9. Textbooks and teacher's manual

All textbooks - one of each subject and for each year - are prescribed by the Pedagogical Institute, and published by the Ministry of Education. For each subject

a teacher manual is also provided as an aiding teaching tool. The teacher's manual for each subject determines the learning objectives for each unit. Teacher's manual is the last ring of the educational control chain which deliberately aims to restrict teacher's autonomy (Mavrogiorgos, 1988). To illuminate the degree of control it is interesting to note that so detailed 'prescriptions' as for instance, there are dictated the specific questions the teacher has to address to the class. The teacher is obliged to follow these guide-lines, has little flexibility to implement innovations or to adopt teaching methods according to local conditions and to the abilities of the particular class pupils.

However, in practice the reality is different. On the one hand, educational advisers continuously check for the accurate application of the official guide-lines, teachers on the other, strive to keep their professional autonomy by following sometimes, either traditional methods of instruction or by trying innovations as they believe them more effective for their pupils' progress. This is reflected in this study within the different assessment styles identified (chapter 10).

Pupils and teachers cannot use other books than the one offered by the ministry of education. That way it is obvious that the government leads to conformity, uniformity and control, that is they attempt to impose to the pupils only the government prevailing ideology and policies, in other words reproduction of these values and ideas (Makrinioti, 1982; Mavrogiorgos, 1993).

It is of interest to remark here that new pupil textbooks and teacher manuals are one of the major reforms of the socialist government (1981-1990). Most teachers and pupils accepted with enthusiasm the new books (Papastamatis, 1988). These textbooks have been written under the influence of Bloom (1956), Bruner (1960, 1966) and Piaget (1950, 1971).

As far as assessment is concerned, the new books embodied at the end of each unit tests, exercises and tasks which pupils had to work on during the last 15 minutes of the teaching session and the teacher had to supervise and provide individually assistance to pupils. In addition, at the end of each greater cluster of teaching units there was an overview test-sheet for each subject.

All the previous comments are closely connected with this study since textbooks and teacher manuals are the basic tools of everyday instruction and therefore affect classroom assessments. The assimilation of textbooks ideas and objectives is in the final analysis the task of assessment. It is of importance, therefore, to see their impact on: teacher's assessment attitudes, practices, remedial measures, recording and reporting approaches, and consequently their impact on children.

Bearing in mind the above interrelating factors, one could expect in the classroom a degree of practice uniformity, and conformity. Teachers therefore, might asses consciously, and mainly unconsciously, in line with the values and principles which the prevailing ideologies and authorities impose. Thus, for example, the finding that the majority of teachers answer in the questionnaire that they mainly asses pupil's critical ability (chapter 8), it is not surprising, because this is stressed in the prevailing official policy, ideology and curriculum, during the last decade. However, classroom observations might indicate different or even the opposite results.

Such teaching equipment provision raises questions such as: To what extent do teachers comply, to the manual instructions? Does it leads to teaching uniformity? Do teachers apply traditional or progressive teaching styles? The findings of this study could give some indicative answers to these questions (chapters 8,9,10).

In the next section the teachers' role is explored as they are the fundamental factor of formal schooling.

6.10. Teachers background

The great majority of Greek primary school teachers come from both the working and the rural classes (Makrinioti, 1982; Papastamatis, 1988; Starida, 1990). Two basic reasons explain this origin. First, because the profession is deemed as providing a middle class status, and it does not offer high salary. Primary teachers are the last in the public workers scale in terms of earning. This reason makes the job unattractive for the children of the upper, and even the middle class (Massialas et al., 1988).

The economic status of the profession expressed by the chairman of Primary Teachers Union (DOE) in an interview to the Guardian (27-8-1991), "Greek primary teachers are among the worst paid in Europe. A departmental head with 30 years of experience earns only £570 per month". In terms of gender distribution until recently nearly half of teachers were women and half men.

Conditions of Greek teachers employment imposed by the central government have affected their degrees of autonomy, in both positive and negative terms. Control of the central government over all aspects of employment has made teachers unable to exert their professional control (Mavrogiorgos, 1988; Starida, 1990) in an autonomous way.

Accountability of Greek teachers is seen in terms of their loyalty to civil service. They are accountable to the central government, as the present (chapters 8, 9) and other studies verify (Makrinioti, 1982; Starida, 1990) which is the provider of their employment by performing their contractual duties in a way strictly defined by it. Broadfoot et al. (1993) in a comparative study between English and French primary

teachers found that the English teachers felt more accountable to the public whilst the French ones, like the Greeks, felt accountable to the ministry of education. One reason for this difference could be the different cultures and the different education systems of these countries.

Teaching, as in England, is an aging profession in Greece and this means that the majority of Greek teachers carry with them the residuals of the training they received in the 1970s, as well as that they may become less adaptive to introduced changes (Starida, 1990; Broadfoot, 1992).

Since the majority of primary teachers come from working or rural classes (Massialas et al., 1988), it is expected to express traditional attitudes and beliefs on values and ideas prevailing in their social class background. Thus trends of traditionalism, obedience, authoritarianism, and discipline are some of the main features of the profession (Papastamatis, 1988).

6.11. Teacher training

Up to 1988, in Greece primary school teachers were trained in one of the 15 state Pedagogical Academies. Candidates for admission must hold the secondary school leaving certificate and must take an entrance examination. After a two-year course and the passing of written examinations, a diploma was awarded. Academies' syllabus was oriented towards teaching of primary curriculum subjects. All pedagogical academies offered the same syllabuses prescribed by the ministry of education. The opportunities for initial teaching practice and for continuing professional development through the interaction of theory and practice was very limited. Few teachers had the opportunity to improve their professional skills and to up-date knowledge of their special subjects. There was a wide range of subjects in the curriculum with few options and the way of teaching was mainly verbal. There was no continuous supervised teaching practice; students may watch

demonstration lessons in the experimental schools associated with the academies but may not actually practice adequately on teaching.

The primary teachers initial training institutions, Pedagogical Academies, were replaced with the establishment of the *Pedagogika Tmimata* (Law, 1268/1982, cl. 48). These offer eight-semester courses at University level. Eight *Pedagogika Tmimata* operate up to 1991, at Greek Universities.

Up to 1986 one-year inservice training to primary teachers was provided at 10 educational institutions, catering totally for about 500 teachers who were selected by a draw of the candidates. Except these, in Athens operates the *Maraslion Didaskalion* in which 140 primary school teachers are trained every year, (100 for ordinary studies and 40 for special education) for two-year course. Teachers are admitted to this training institution if they have completed at least three years teaching experience and passed highly competitive examinations. From 1988 the Pedagogical Institute and the provincial centres for in-service training are responsible to train primary and secondary teachers (Law 1566, 1985).

6.12. Overview

This section briefly described the context within which the Greek education system operates, its framework, and the social context. A reference was made to the main recent reforms based on the ideas of the progressive pedagogy. The Greek National Curriculum, the educational policy, as well as the aims and the operation of the primary education were also considered.

Particular attention was paid to the various ways that the Greek ministry of education uses to control the system. In the case of classroom assessment therefore, it might exert its influence on teacher practices in various ways such as: by obliging them to attain the goals posed by the central authority; through the textbooks, the

teacher's manual, the curricula and the prevailing ideologies expressed within them; by prescribing in every detail the formal assessment activities, such as tests and tasks at the end of each taught unit; by offering the same syllabuses in all teacher training institutions; by using an army of agents to police (Broadfoot, 1992) their policies. Finally, teachers status as civil servants, being accountable directly to the ministry of education, is another way to control them and to reduce their autonomy.

A reference to the textbooks and teacher manual, teachers' socioeconomic background, and training was also made since it was assumed that these are important factors that could influence teachers' beliefs and assessment practices.

Obviously these are fundamental factors that arguably influence teaching and learning and hence classroom assessment. In order to understand why classroom assessment operates the way it operates, one has to consider all these factors which construct the context of the enterprise. This context is also considered for the interpretation of the present study's data (chapters 8, 9, 10).

How far teachers apply the official policies is an interesting issue for this study, which is reflected within the different assessment styles identified in the data (chapter 10). The introduction of the 'progressive' pedagogy has an instrumental role in the evolution of the assessment system, and the next section presents recent developments of the formal assessment system in Greek primary schools.

6.13. RECENT ASSESSMENT DEVELOPMENTS

Introduction

This section describes the legislative and educational context within which formal assessment operates in Greek primary schools, the main reforms it has been subject to and their implications. In particular, it deals with examinations, recording and

reporting, grading, and remediation in the light of the official legislation. All these issues it is assumed influence teachers' believes and practices. Thus, they might help first, the examination of the study's data, and second, the reader to understand why classroom assessment issues are developed the way they are, under the pressure of the forces that each time produce them.

The official assessment policy during the long period 1834-1977 took the form of examinations, firstly oral and gradually written, to fulfil purposes of selection, control and accountability (Bouzakis, 1988; Mavrogiorgos, 1988; Mylonas, 1993) which were not relevant to the pupils' learning, and its evaluation.

Until the reform 1977 no pupils should leave primary school without a leaving certificate which was awarded after examination, to those who had regularly attended. Pupils who failed to reach a minimum competence standard at the end of any year-level had to repeat that year-level (OECD, 1982). After successfully completing the first primary sector pupils were awarded a primary school leaving certificate, *apolyterio*, which qualified them to register for the entrance examination for one of the various types of secondary school.

Recent assessment developments refer to examinations, recording and reporting, remedial provisions, and communication issues for the period (1977-1991). All these are examined in the light of a series of Decrees regarding assessment: (483/1977); (497/1981); (390/1990) and (462/1991). This legislation is examined because the investigator assumes that it may influences teachers' current assessment views and practices.

6.14. Examinations

The most notable developments refer to the abolition (1980) and restoration (1991) of the promotion examinations of the last two year - levels in primary school.

Examinations were abolished by a conservative government. That was the time when they saw that the primary school leaving certificate had not any merit for the labour market. Primary school leavers proceed automatically to the secondary school without having to pass entrance examinations. Pupils' progress is assessed mainly orally and through occasional essay tests throughout each year.

Another conservative government restored these examinations with small amendments (Decree, 390/1990). By the end of May pupils of the two last year-levels have to sit for written examinations in the subjects, modern Greek language, maths, science, humanities, and foreign language.

However, these measures faced massive resistance in September 1991, when the government attempted to implement them in a set of authoritarian educational measures for all education sectors. The aggregate opposition from teacher Unions, parents and secondary and university students, resulted on series of debate, demonstrations, teacher strikes and unfortunately the murder of a secondary teacher in Patras during violent episodes ('The Voice of Greece', 15-11-1991, 7.30 pm). This strong movement of resistance ceased after the resignation of the minister of education and the government took back most of those authoritarian measures.

6.15. Recording

Teachers should keep a 'profile' sheet for every pupil where they daily note pupil's progress and behaviour (Decree 483/1977). The decree (390/1990) introduces an interesting innovation. At the end of each term teachers submit to the head an analytical 'dual' grade for each pupil per subject: a) *Diatomikos vathmos*. That is an achievement grade, which indicates how well the pupil has mastered the previous term's objectives, i.e. criterion-referenced assessment. b) *Endoatomik*os *vathmos* (Ipsative assessment), resulted in a grade for effort, to attain the objectives considering individual differences. Both these grades are expressed by letter (A, B,

C,) descriptors for the first two year-levels and by numbers, (1-10) plus the same descriptors for the remaining levels.

6.16. Grading

They used various approaches such as, marking scale (1-10), letter grades (A, B, C, D), and verbal descriptors (Excellent, V.Good, Good, Adequate). The decree (483/1977) determines that first and second year-levels are graded by only verbal description: (Excellent, Very Good, Adequate). The remaining year-levels get a mark plus a descriptor (10: Excellent; 8-9: Very good, 6-7: Good; 5, Adequate). The Decree (497/1981) provides only for the last two year-levels mark plus descriptor. The remaining get only descriptors.

The implementation of the Law (1566, 1985) and in particular its provision for abolition of the grading system raised various reactions. The president of Parents federation for instance, stated: "We will fight to re-establish grading in primary school" (NEA, 22-9-1986). Teachers Union criticised the abolition of grading as antipedagogic and they asked for the restoration of grading using a broader marking scale (Rizospastis, 23-4-1987).

The next relevant legislation, (Decree, 390/1990) provides for the first, and second year-levels: Letter plus a descriptor (A: excellent, B: V. Good; C: Good; D: Inadequate). The remaining year-levels get a descriptor plus mark, as the old (483/1977) Decree had specified.

As far as the final grade is concerned, according to the decrees (390/ 1990) and (462/1991) the first and second year-levels get only general descriptor of their annual progress. The remaining year-levels get a final grade for each subject which is the average of all the terms grades.

6.17. Classroom assessment

The importance of continuous assessment, that includes not only academic but also affective qualities, efforts and skills, was stressed by the Law (1566/1985), as well as by the Decree (390/1990). They also note the role of teacher assessment that is based on the degree of pupils' attaining the objectives, their attitudes, behaviour, pupil's 'biography' (Pollard, 1985), psychological or other problems. Considering these data the teacher can take the necessary measures for improvement and informs parents and adviser. However, this 'holistic' assessment has been criticised as another attempt to 'control' the whole pupil not only its intellectual part (Mavrogiorgos, 1993).

Marks are typically dominant (Papastamatis, 1988; Makrinioti, 1982; Starida, 1990) despite widespread recognition that they are unconstructive and difficult to interpret (Rowntree, 1977; Cassotakis, 1981) because of the lack of explicit objectives and criteria.

From the year 1982, pupils who are diagnosed by their teachers as lacking the minimum competence for their year-levels in reading, writing or arithmetic, are allocated to attend a two hour remedial class daily, within their school (Decree, 497/1981). This is considered as a remarkable innovation resulted from assessment and aiming to fulfil the principle of equality, by considering individual differences and providing measures to aid the low ability pupils. However, such measures have been interpreted (Sharp and Green, 1975), as a compensation attitude from the government towards the less able pupils who mostly come from deprived working class background.

6.18. Overview

Overall, it is evident that the purposes of this legislation and reforms were reporting, selection, control and accountability, i.e. summative purposes, not to

assist learning. Hence, it is interesting to see the implications of all these in classroom assessment operation given the summative orientation of the context.

It is surprising the pace by which so many drafts and final Presidential Decrees regarding primary assessment had been published or withdrawn during a short period (1977-1991). These changes usually dealt with the forms of grading from numerical to letters and descriptive grading.

The most important change was the abolition and restoration of promotion examinations for the last two year-levels of the primary school, which is accompanied with innovations in the recording and reporting system.

Some interesting points emerge from the (1981-91) legislation such as first, the importance of assessment as a continuing process, placing the onus on internal classroom affairs, i.e. on teacher's judgements built up from information gathered during classroom observations and regarding children's background. In addition, teachers had to concentrate on curriculum objectives and finally to take the appropriate remedial measures to aid children's learning, and to inform parents.

It could be argued that among the reasons of these frequent changes could be the political instability in Greece resulted in frequent general elections and therefore when socialists succeeded by conservatives they change the previous system, and vice versa (Papastamatis, 1988).

Another reason could be the lack of long education research in Greece. Most educational measures are taken hastily by the ministry of education or under unavoidable pressures from interested parties (Papastamatis, 1988; Mavrogiorgos, 1993).

The frequent changes of the assessment regulations indicate the importance the government places on assessment. They are indicative of the ways the state attempted to control the system and the ways and agencies used to implement and police its educational policies.

Though they tried hard to implement and change their formal assessment procedures, there is not much evidence that they managed in fact to do this. In practice they could not change the informal classroom assessment which is always there, and is not amenable to formal directives for change.

The frequent changes of the assessment directives (Mylonas, 1993), the inadequate teachers training for assessment and the lack of information to parents and pupils regarding the new measures, resulted (Mavrogiorgos, 1993) in some confusion, anxiety and insecurity for most of these people. Similar reactions (Pollard et al., 1994) accompanied the assessment of the National Curriculum in England and Wales.

All the above issues directly or indirectly are related to the present study because they form the social, legislative and operational context within which this piece of research is carried out, and with reference to this context the study's data are to be interpreted.

The following part deals with the empirical research of this study, its methodology and findings.

PART II: THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

CHAPTER 7: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology which the investigator followed to carry out the empirical part of this study. The first section examines in general the quantitative and qualitative approaches in educational research, as well as approaches to analysing and presenting the data. The second explains the sampling procedures followed. The third section describes the particular approaches and instruments used here for data collection, the rationale for their selection, their limitations and advantages, as well as how the researcher attempted to minimize their limitations.

7.1. Quantitative vs qualitative research

Until relatively recently quantitative methods have dominated educational research (Hamilton, Jenkins, King, MacDonald, & Parlett, 1977; Cassotakis, 1981; Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Wiersma, 1986; Bryman & Cramer, 1990).

Quantitative techniques involve quantifying phenomena, using tests, questionnaires, social surveys or structured interviews. A positivist (quantitative) approach to social and educational research is generally taken to imply that "the methodological procedures of natural science may be directly adapted" (Giddens, 1974, p.3). The researcher is seen "as an objective, apolitical and value-free being, who works at a necessary distance from the 'object' of study" (Griffin, 1985, p.100). So, the subjects of research can be treated as 'objects' similar to objects in the natural world and they can be studied in an objective 'value-free' way.

Quantitative procedures allow researchers to manipulate the data using computer packages objectively and may permit law-like generalizations about the social world. Such techniques allow social scientists to carry out large-scale comparative analyses.

Qualitative techniques involve more open-ended, 'free response' questions based on informal, loosely structured interviews, or observation. Such approaches allow the researcher to obtain first hand knowledge about the empirical social world in question. In this way, research on and in educational institutions can be based on permanent recordings of everyday life in naturally occurring settings.

By and large, researchers have turned to qualitative methods in order to get access to the meanings which participants assign to social situations. However, qualitative methods are fairly time-consuming and often used in smaller-scale case study based research concerned with subjective experience and social meanings.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods have benefits and limitations. Indeed, there is some polarity (Griffin, 1985) between qualitative and quantitative methods. The former is considered to be soft, subjective and speculative, while the latter is described as hard, objective and rigourous (Wiersma, 1986). There is always some danger, for example, that qualitative research may come to be taken as a self-justifying activity, and our knowledge of the world will be generated through interpretations. This has to do with the capacity of individuals to interpret social events and to attribute personal meanings to the world in which they function.

Nevertheless, subjectivity exists even in using quantitative research methods, since the individual researchers are the persons to interpret the results. Indeed, they explain the findings from their own stand-point. So, both methods seem to be disadvantaged if used only by themselves. Bryman & Cramer (1990) remark that

> qualitative research is by no means as pervasive as quantitative research, and in any case many writers recognize that there is much to be gained from a fusion of the two research traditions (p.1).

Many writers suggest (Hamilton et al., 1977; Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Wiersma, 1986; Bryman & Cramer, 1990) that in educational research both quantitative and qualitative approaches should be combined and used. Specifically, qualitative methods should be used to illuminate the findings from the quantitative techniques. The use then of both approaches will combine an interpretive theoretical framework, a better understanding of the findings, an interpretation which is closer to the reality, and a measure for generalisability.

Thus, the investigator who has a flexible research design and who utilizes a range of research methods, qualitative and quantitative, can bring distinct advantages to a project, gaining fuller knowledge, and collecting more reliable data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Woods, 1986).

The use of a single method of inquiry seems inadequate since each approach has its own specific bias and each is more or less effective under certain circumstances. That is why the researcher in this study gathered data through different methods and applied 'between methods triangulation' (Delamont, 1976). As Wiersma (1986) put it

> Triangulation is qualitative cross-validation. It assesses the sufficiency of the data according to the convergence of multiple data sources or multiple data collection procedures (p. 246).

Therefore, an adaptation of 'ethnographic' approach (Hamilton et al., 1977; Bogdan & Biklen, 1982), involving classroom observations and keeping field notes was used to illuminate and supplement the findings of a questionnaire. Ethnographic research in education is defined by Wiersma (1986) as:

> the process of providing scientific descriptions of educational systems, processes, and phenomena within their specific contexts (p. 233).

The approach involves *field research* and requires *contextualization*- the interpretation of results in the context of the data collection. Ethnographic research relies heavily on observation, description, and qualitative judgements of whatever phenomena are being studied. The emphasis in such approaches is to understand the phenomenon under study from the perspective of those being studied, (here teachers and pupils). Ethnographic research takes a general and holistic perspective. Hypotheses are more likely to emerge from the data than to be formulated prior to the research (Woods, 1986). However, ethnographic research though qualitative in nature should not exclude the use of quantitative methodology (Wiersma, 1986) if it is applicable and useful.

It is interesting to see what research says first, about the advantages and limitations of observations and questionnaires (the main approaches used in this study for data collection); and second, about the ways of analysing and presenting the findings. In the light of this reading the investigator adapted his approaches for data collection and analysis.

7.2. DATA COLLECTION

7.2.1. Observation advantages

Many investigators think that only by direct observation in the natural milieu can basic patterns of human behaviour be obtained (Galton et al., 1980; Woods, 1986; Hammersley, 1990). A direct observer can observe behaviour at the time of its occurrence which may be missed by using either interview or questionnaire (Turney and Robb, 1971).

Observation is the most basic and direct approach for obtaining behavioural information and other instruments have their origins in observations made in the past (Burroughs, 1975; Wiersma, 1986; Vamvoukas, 1988).

Observational studies attempt to increase understanding of the reasons for differences between theory and reality, educational policy and classroom practice (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982; Woods, 1986; Wiersma, 1986). They focus upon events more than words and look first hand at interactions and behaviours.

7.2.2. Limitations of observations

The main disadvantages of an observational approach could be summarised as follows:

First, an observer may make faulty inferences from observations (Kerlinger, 1986; Verma & Beard, 1981). Different observers may view events in different ways since perceptions are subject to distortions (Child, 1981; Papastamatis, 1988). Second, the observer's presence might alter the subjects' behaviour (Engelhart, 1972; Turney & Robb, 1971; Harlen, and Qualter, 1991). Third, observation is time consuming and the investigator may gather data without obtaining anything really significant during the period of observation (Nisbet and Entwistle 1970).

Systematic observation has also disadvantages such as:

First, systematic observation schedules deal with what can be categorised or measured and thus run the risk of distorting, obscuring or ignoring the qualitative features through crude measurement techniques or by using ill-defined boundaries between the categories (Delamont and Hamilton, 1984). It is impossible in a systematic observation schedule to record feelings, expressions, atmosphere, spontaneously occurred events during interactions (Black & Broadfoot, 1982).

Second, it is mainly concerned with overt, observable behaviour and therefore runs the risk of neglecting possibly more meaningful features (Delamont and Hamilton, 1984). Third, it typically ignores the temporal and spatial context in which the data are collected. It is not fair to use the same schedule to record all teachers since their teaching context might be considerably different in terms of classroom size, pupil quality, resources, the type of activity being undertaken in class, and school climate (Broadfoot, and Osborn, 1987). Moreover, it usually focuses on small parts of events or behaviour rather than on global ones. Fourth, results of systematic observation using pre-specified categories to produce normative and numerical data are suitable (Delamont and Hamilton, 1984) only when used with typical classrooms, teachers and students. The pre-specified categories pre-determine what is to be observed, preoccupy the researchers and restrict their attention. They might therefore, miss other interesting activities which occur simultaneously (Vamvoukas, 1988; Woods, 1986). In addition, systematic observation may obscure the continuous change of social interaction, by placing arbitrary boundaries on continuous phenomena. As Stenhouse (1975) put it, systematic observation provides mirrors of behaviour (Simon & Boyer, 1970), but they are distorting mirrors.

Besides, every observational approach is subject to the bias, prejudice and value-judgements of the observer. As has been frequently said, the observer may select the events to observe and ignore others just as important (Harlen & Qualter, 1991). Some of the items might depend on the subjective judgement of the observer to allocate them in the a or b category. Even when several observers are used, it is not guaranteed that an objective judgement can be made. Thus, any account of a teacher's activities based on such items and neglecting contextual information would be misleading (Broadfoot & Osborn, 1987). There is an obvious need for supportive field notes to supplement such observations.

7.2.3. Questionnaires' advantages

Since questionnaires allow for the use of a large and representative sample they are efficient and practical. The researcher can gather in a relatively short time the required data at a reasonable low cost.

Standardised questionnaires can provide relatively objective measures of a number of variables, given their validity and reliability (Oppenheim, 1966). The instructions are the same to all and the researcher does not appear personally, as an interviewer, to influence the results (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 1979). Since the responses are given anonymously in the absence of the researcher there will be not any researcher's bias (Nisbet & Entwistle, 1970). Questionnaires give quantitative hard data (especially with closed items), that can be statistically analysed by the various computer packages.

7.2.4. Questionnaires' limitations

The investigator cannot put the subjects at ease and obtain their full cooperation. This happens especially when the respondents attempt to protect themselves.

Respondents tend to answer inaccurately on some items either from forgetfulness or distaste when facing specific issues (Triandis, 1971) or because of poor articulation, and misunderstanding the terminology (Kerlinger, 1986). When questionnaires are sent by post only a small proportion, less than half, of respondents often return them. Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (1979), note that there are differences in the characteristics of respondents and non-respondents. Non-respondents may be less educated, less interested and conscientious, or less favourable to the questionnaire topic, thus such a sample is unrepresentative and the results cannot be generalised (Bennett & Hill, 1964). It is well known that questionnaire surveys are prone to 'the reproduction of rhetoric '; that respondents are often unwilling to admit 'failures' or doubts about what they are doing; and that there is a tendency for

respondents to please the researcher, or to give desirable and fashionable answers (Lovell & Lawson, 1970; Satterly, 1981; Wiersma, 1986).

7.3. DATA ANALYSIS

According to (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982) data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the fieldnotes and other materials that researchers accumulate to increase their understanding of them and to enable them to present what they discovered to others.

> Analysis involves working with data, organising it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p.145).

As Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) put it, during analysis the researcher looks to see

> whether any interesting patterns can be identified; whether anything stands out as surprising or puzzling; how the data relate to what one might have expected on the basis of common-sense knowledge, official accounts, or previous theory; and whether there are any apparent inconsistencies or contradictions among the views of different groups or individuals, or between people's expressed beliefs or attitudes and what they do (p.178).

A combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis is carried out here in order to make the data comprehensible. The aim here is to present a general picture of classroom assessment in a typical Greek primary classroom within the context of the school, the Greek National Curriculum, and the educational policy (chapter 6).

There are different sorts of analysis that stem from the particular design and perspective of the research process. In social sciences a combination of qualitative and quantitative analyses are often employed. However, there are some basic differences between them which are briefly drawn here. Qualitative analysis, concentrates mainly on identifying the meanings of social situations and

the structure of the events. Moreover, it attempts to explain individual actions in the light of the actor's definitions and interpretations of the events (Wiersma, 1986). Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) see qualitative analysis as

> the attempt to organize, account for, and provide explanations of data so that some kind of sense may be made of it. The researcher moves from description of what is the case to an explanation of why that is the case (p. 73).

Quantitative analysis on the other hand, deals with the measurement of the amount, extent, incident, or patterning of particular events so as to make some generalizations.

The basic idea of qualitative analysis is not so much to test a predetermined theory or hypotheses, but rather to generate ideas from the data (Bodgan and Biklen, 1982; Woods, 1986). Qualitative analysis involves the organization, sorting and coding of the data together with the creation of some kind of system for the reproduction of information on specific themes from the mass of data.

Woods (1986), introduced the term "idiographic ethnographic analysis" that is descriptive of particular situations, here classroom assessments. This approach emphasizes the holistic nature of ethnography and the distinctive quality of information discovered which in turn is not covered by the hypotheses of statistical assessment. It does not in itself therefore, permit generalization though it might serve as a basis. There are no "truths" to be discovered, or "proofs" to be made (Woods, 1986); rather the goal here is deeper understanding of interactions related to assessment in the Greek primary classroom. Observational data include details of content, meanings, style and pattern, characteristics which are not easily quantifiable.

7.4. APPROACHES USED IN THIS STUDY

Evidence of the methodologies applied in classroom studies elsewhere, the questions of the present study, and restrictions of time, resources and staffing, led the investigator to decide that classroom observations and the use of a questionnaire were the most feasible approaches. The questionnaire allowed wider sampling. Classroom observations were conducted in order to collect evidence about teachers' assessment practices, and children's reactions to them. This was supplemented by informal interviews and discussions with teachers and pupils.

The researcher felt that this combination would be the most effective for answering the study's questions. In particular, for revealing the pervasiveness and importance of assessment in the classroom; for yielding evidence about the current assessment knowledge and practice of the sample teachers. Additionally, it should reliably indicate the gap between the real and the desirable (according to the literature), and should reveal any consequent issues, such as the constraints teachers face when assessing and their suggestions for improvement. In general, the approaches used aimed to supplement one with another, to counteract bias and to generate more reliable data.

7.5. Sampling

The study's 'population' consists of Greek primary teachers, men and women, with various teaching experience, who taught all subjects to pupils age 5 1/2 to 11 1/2 years old, in rural, urban and suburban state primary schools. All teachers had acquired the qualification essential for teaching in primary school after attending a two-year initial training at a Pedagogical Academy. Some of them had obtained further qualifications during their career.

The ideal would be to select a sample at random from the whole teacher population, so that one could use the results to make generalisations. However, shortage of

time, resources and staffing, as well as the wide scatter of schools across the country made a random sampling from the whole population impracticable. The researcher decided to follow established precedents in choosing a typical sample.

Time, resources, and pragmatic restrictions led the investigator to use an opportunity sample. Two cohorts of teachers who are very similar but also differ constitute the study's sample. The one cohort consisted of 216 primary school teachers attending a two year post-training course at the 'Maraslio' College in Athens. They were typical teachers with at least 5 years teaching experience. They came from different parts of Greece, representing various urban, rural and suburban primary schools.

They were included in the sample because first, there was a chance to elicit the views of a large number of typical teachers. Second, it was assumed that they were different from the classroom teachers because the 'Maraslio' teachers had a stronger motivation for learning and professional development, since they had passed competitive examinations to enter the college. Therefore, the researcher wanted to see whether all these and their actual studies had influenced their assessment perspectives, by comparing them to the perspectives of the classroom teachers.

In order to have also a representative sample of classroom teachers the researcher first, approached the LEA of an Athens district catering for children from all social classes. This was selected because the investigator had formerly taught in schools in this area and he knew the principal, school advisers and many teachers. Second, he also approached the LEA responsible for the island of Kythira, where he was born, and knew most of the teachers. He included them in the sample considering them as typical rural teachers. The researcher is aware that this acquaintance could influence the observational data but an attempt has been made to be as neutral as possible. In short, the reason for selecting those two LEAs was first, convenience,

in terms of time and distance, and second, access to the teachers and the educational administration.

Eventually, a sample of 156 classroom teachers was selected. From those, 140 were teachers working in fourteen urban state schools in one district of Athens, and sixteen teachers from seven schools in Kythira. The wider aim of this study was to describe the general picture of assessment in a typical classroom, and the size and typicality of the sample seemed to fulfil this purpose.

By including therefore, teachers from both the 'Maraslio' college, and urban and rural classroom teachers, the researcher believed that an adequate degree of representationality had been achieved, since the sample teachers had many features common to the whole population; i.e. they had received common initial training, they had been taught a National Curriculum, using a single textbook for each subject, and a single manual, and were subject to common directives (chapter 6).

A questionnaire was addressed to all these teachers. Twenty of them were observed in the classroom, of whom six were in the rural schools. All teachers observed were volunteers, since most of the teachers asked were reluctant to accept observers watching them during teaching, perhaps suspecting them of being spies or evaluators.

7.6. APPROACHES USED FOR DATA COLLECTION

Data collection was carried out during the last term of the school year (1989-1990). It involved two processes, namely, classroom observations, and written responses from the questionnaire. The first approach involved listening to and looking at what teachers and pupils in the research setting itself were doing, as well as talking to them about the meanings they attached to their actions. By the second process teachers anonymously and freely expressed their opinions.

7.7. Administrative arrangements

Firstly, the researcher carried out some administrative arrangements regarding official permission for the research from the Ministry of Education and access to the schools. An application for research permission was submitted to the Pedagogical Institute and two months later the permission was given. The investigator then met the principals and the school advisers at the LEAs to get their permission as well. This was followed by visits to the heads and the staff of the schools selected for observation. In these visits, the researcher was accompanied by a school adviser in order to reassure the teachers and gain their approval for classroom observations.

7.8. Assessment episode

The researcher conceived classroom assessment as a four phase procedure: evidence collection, interpretation, teachers' response, and gauging the implications of all this on pupils' learning and development. The whole process is called in this study *'assessment episode'*. It is important to note that such episodes take place in the classroom sometimes immediately and automatically, sometimes on the basis of conscious consideration. In chapter 9 various such assessment episodes are described as they were observed in the field.

7.9. Classroom observations

The nature of classroom assessment needed close classroom observation in order to see how teachers applied it and, most important, its impacts on the children. Observations were also necessary since many important teacher perspectives and assessment behaviour patterns can only be understood when they occur in informal situations and in their natural environments.

At the planning stage of the classroom observations the researcher considered many aspects associated with classroom assessment, and reviewed studies that used observational approaches to gather data such as the ORACLE schedule (Galton and Simon, 1980); (Bogdan & Biklen 1982; Hamilton and Delamont, 1984; Stenhouse, 1975; Burgess, 1984; Hargreaves, 1975; Crossley & Vulliamy, 1984; Spradley, 1980; Woods, 1986). Classroom observations aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex reality surrounding classroom assessment; to ascertain what teachers actually do in the classroom, as opposed to what they only assert they do, (when responding to the questionnaire); and to modify the questionnaire.

Bearing in mind the questions of the present study, the complexity of the field work and the advantages and disadvantages of observational approaches used in other studies, it was decided to use an adaptation of an ethnographic approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Woods, 1986) to gather information, rather than a more systematic observation approach like the one used in the ORACLE study.

Systematic observation using check-lists was considered inadequate and inappropriate for recording, a smile, or a teacher's frowning, the different tone of the teacher's voice, - what are often called 'para - linguistic' expressions - (Pollard, 1985), that convey evaluative meaning, and many other important things occurring in the context of assessment which are not been included in the check-list.

Classroom observations at urban schools were conducted daily, in the morning and in the afternoon sessions, with different sets of pupils and teachers respectively. The reason is that in large Greek cities, because of the over-population and the lack of buildings, schools operate daily in two sessions (chapter 6). Thus, accommodating in the same building two different schools.

Since it was impossible to record everything that occurs in a classroom the researcher had to make some decisions in advance about which set of interactions to focus on. Pre-eminence was given to: interactions between teacher and pupils or pupils and their peers; textbook work, homework, teacher's written and oral comments, the grading and recording systems teachers use, and so on. Finally, it was intended to supplement observational data with discussions and informal interviews with teachers and pupils for the sake of clarifying and justifying their actions and the way they conceive the relevant processes. It was assumed that in that way it could be possible for the researcher to acquire some insights about classroom assessment procedures and the factors influencing teacher's decision making.

Eventually, over a term period, six rural classes in the island of Kythira and fourteen in urban state schools in the district of Athens previously mentioned were selected for classroom observation for at least one whole day and most for several days, because as (Crossley & Guthrie, 1987) put it:

> Observational research is complementary to questionnaires, interviews and experimental methods of inquiry. Direct observation can enhance understanding beyond the levels possible from questionnaire and interview data dependent upon the accuracy of answers provided by respondents (p.65).

In line with ethnographic practice (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983; Burgess, 1984; Woods, 1986) extensive field notes have been compiled which were supported by documentary material. Lessons in various subjects have been observed. The researcher was a non-participant observer, observing things as they happened, naturally and with the classroom disturbed by his presence as little as possible.

In order to counteract the limitations of the observations further actions were taken which included:

. careful planning of the observations
. asking subjects to explain their actions
. focusing on assessment activities
. not intervening during the lesson
. keeping supplementary field notes
. examining documentary material (children's books, or written work, teachers' notes, school records)
. keeping notes on the contextual setting

7.10. The Questionnaire

During classroom observations field notes were kept which helped to illustrate the analysis, to support the results interpretation, and to modify a preliminary questionnaire designed in the light of the questions of the study and research evidence (Oppenheim, 1966; Cohen & Manion, 1979; Sudman & Bradburn, 1982; Evans, 1984; Clough et al., 1984; Croll, 1986; Vamvoukas, 1988). This preliminary questionnaire was piloted (it was addressed to 10 teachers in three different urban schools and posted to 4 teachers of different schools in the island of Kythira). After some necessary refinements, the final version was developed. The questionnaire (appendix 1) was given to the teachers in the last week of the term. At total, 400 questionnaires were issued and 372, (89%) usable ones were returned.

Although the questionnaire (appendix 1), was self-explanatory and could be completed without additional direction, a cover letter was provided to explain the purpose of the study, to assure teachers of individual anonymity, and to encourage a prompt response. The instrument used was rather short because long questionnaires are a burden for the respondents and often do not get returned (Wiersma, 1986; Vamvoukas, 1988). The questionnaire limitations were minimised:

- by piloting it before constructing its final version
- by emphasising the confidentiality of the responses
- by addressing it personally and providing explanations
- by stressing the importance of the study in the introductory letter and asking subjects' cooperation.

7.10.1. Questionnaire rationale

The questionnaire aimed: to reveal teachers' views on the importance they placed on classroom assessment and the various practices they applied; to indicate their awareness of assessment's potential to assist teaching and learning; to show the influence and restrictions they felt from administrative, pedagogical, pragmatic or personal factors; to indicate the children's qualities they are looking for when assessing; to see how far they said that they apply the official directives, and what they suggest for improvement.

Most of the items were of the closed type. This eased data analysis but on the other hand responses to them lack the individual flavour afforded by the open-ended questions which supplemented the instrument. By providing some open-ended questions teachers could express freely their feelings and thoughts, and justify their views. Overall, the questionnaire items were not constructed in the form of Likert-type scales in order to provide scores suitable for cluster or factor analysis. Rather the researcher was interested in collecting teachers' views on various aspects of classroom assessment, such as the variety of assessments used, the justification of applying or refusing particular practices, problems they face, etc., in order to understand the operation, complexity and implications of classroom assessment in a typical Greek primary classroom.

Generally, this questionnaire was considered an adequate means for providing a lot of information relating to the whole question of classroom assessment, its place

within the teaching process, and ways for change using the analysis of those responses.

Of course, there are alternative approaches. However, in the light of the questions of this study, the context, the time and resource restrictions and the particular circumstances of the present study, the investigator feels that the approaches used were the most suitable and provided rich data constructing a general picture of classroom assessment that helps the reader to understand its complexity and potential.

7.11. DATA ANALYSIS OF THIS STUDY

7.11.1. Observational data analysis

In this study, the investigator has done a lot of analysis in the field during the classroom observations when selecting what to attend to and what to record (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983; Woods, 1986). Later on the researcher analysed the observational data at a second level by reading through the field notes and materials, determining what issues and features consistently emerged, and what themes appeared more often than others. During this long process specific patterns, topics and categories (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989) of activities and events were revealed.

These observational data convey some of the richness and variety of what went on in observed Greek primary classrooms in terms of assessment. They also assist the search for patterns deriving from these assessments, helping to explain why certain teachers do one thing while others do something else. One interesting result therefore, will be to provide a profile of the 'typical' teacher(s) from the observational descriptions. This might in future enable teachers to reflect on their

own practice and teacher training institutions or INSET programmes to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

7.11.2. Questionnaire data analysis

The responses for each item of the questionnaire were coded and frequency distributions worked out. A number of Chi-squared tests were also carried out to seek for statistical significance in responses which related to teachers' academic qualifications, gender, school type, class size, grade level taught, and teaching experience. Tables were constructed to summarise and present such results (chapter 8, and appendix 2).

The overall goal of this part of the analysis was first, to describe classroom assessment practices, teachers' views on various assessment issues and to see the importance these teachers placed on assessment as part of their teaching. Second, to describe the assessment performance of the 'typical' Greek primary school teacher, and third to identify any patterns of assessment.

Because these teachers may not be representative of the general Greek primary teacher population and because the practices described reflect what teachers say they do - not necessarily what they actually do - inferences about the assessment practices of Greek primary teachers in general are not justified. Nevertheless, there is a value in setting out teachers' views, since their characteristics and also their schools are prima facie typical at least. Moreover, they were expected to implement the same educational policy (Law 1566, 1985). The results of the questionnaire are discussed in terms of the complexity of the tasks these teachers face during their assessments.

Obviously, no legitimate attempt can be made from these data to make generalizations. However, overall the findings of this study may be suggestive of

trends and approaches that could lend themselves to a more precise definition of variables in the future. It is in that explanatory vein that the following report of the findings and their interpretations is made.

The next chapter presents the questionnaire findings.

CHAPTER 8: TEACHER'S VIEWS ON CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT

Introduction

The review of the literature in the previous chapters has revealed that assessment is a central feature of classroom life which certainly influences learning. The empirical data in this chapter support this view by showing, the wide variety of practices used; the multiple functions of classroom assessment; the characteristics that teachers mainly assess; and by reporting the difficulties they face when assessing, as well as their suggestions for improvement.

These data were gathered through a questionnaire addressed to two cohorts of Greek primary school teachers, both broadly representative but with some differences (chapter 7). These were 216 teachers attending the 'Maraslio', two year post-training college in Athens, and 154 classroom teachers in urban and rural schools. The broader aim of the questionnaire was to provide some answers to the study's questions:

- How important is assessment in the classroom?
- Do teachers need to be aware of its potential and of how to use it effectively?
- What evidence have we of teachers' current knowledge and practice about assessment?
- How big is the gap between existing knowledge and practice and the desirable (according to the literature)? What problems are caused thereby?
- What might be done to reduce the gap and what might be recommended for future research?

The previous chapter 7 on methodology examined the advantages, the limitations and the content of the questionnaire. The present chapter reveals what teachers said that they do and why, and what they do not do.

Findings are presented here under the main subheads 'Why teachers assess?', 'How they assess?', 'What they assess?' 'What problems they face, and what they suggest for improvement'. The structure of the chapter is on the same lines as the literature review and the chapter which reports observations. Overall results are summarised in tables of frequencies. These data are further analysed with cross tabulation procedures and chi-squared tests in a search for statistical significance against a number of these key variables which the researcher felt that might influence teachers' views and practices: teachers' gender, academic qualifications, teaching experience, level taught, status ('Maraslio' college, and classroom teachers), and school location (urban and rural teachers). Percentage totals exceed one hundred in tables that present percentages where multiple responses were possible. Those tables which show the most notable differences are included in the text, the others appear in the appendix 2.

Four hundred questionnaires were sent out to the sample, and 372 suitable for the analysis returned. The whole sample was representative and consisted of roughly half male and half female teachers. About 75% of the teachers had a higher degree. As far as the teaching experience is concerned 36% were new teachers (0-8) years, 45% had an average amount (9-16) years, and about 19% were long experienced teachers (17-35) years. The term teaching level is used in this thesis to indicate the level or year that a child attends in the Greek primary school. For this thesis the first level constitute the years (1-2), the second (3-4), and the third level (5-6) years. The term 'classroom teachers' refers to full-time teachers, and it is used to differentiate them from those who were attending the 'Maraslio' post-training college at the time of the study.

8.1. WHY TEACHERS ASSESS?

To discover teachers' more fundamental views regarding 'why' they assess, and

their opinions on assessment's role in aiding teaching and learning, they were asked: How does assessment help teaching and learning? What the purposes of teacher comments are? and, how do you use the assessment results?

A careful consideration however of responses on several other items (the assessment practices used, the types of written comments teachers apply, which children's traits they assess, and the factors which influence their practices) reveals an underlying rationale on which teachers tend to base many of their assessment decisions.

8.1.1. How assessment promotes teaching / learning?

To seek teachers' views on the role of assessment they were asked the open-ended item: 'Do you think that assessment helps teaching and learning? If yes, in which way? If no, why not?' Forty five different categories of responses were provided and tables 2 and (2.2, 2.3 in appendix 2) report those which were indicated by more than 3% of the cases.

Table 2. Assessment utility (cases %)

Teacher feedback	39.6
Motivates learning	32.9
Enhances pupils' self-esteem	23.2
Diagnostic tool	20.7
Feedback to the pupil	19.5
Recognition of effort	16.2
Fosters constructive competition	15.2
Remedy of weaknesses	14.9
Fosters pupils' self-awareness	5.5
Destroys teacher/pupil relations	4.3
Teacher controls children	3.4
Communication to parents	3.0

In general table 2 shows the importance teachers claim for assessment and their awareness of its potential to assist learning, (key questions of the study) which are indicated by the wide range of assessment uses teachers provided. Also evident is the trend towards stating the fashionable in the Greek literature, and the Greek Government rhetoric of that time, progressive functions of formative assessment i.e. motivation for learning, feedback to teacher and pupil, diagnosis, rewards for effort, and reinforcing children's self-esteem. Typical responses were:

> It helps me to diagnose my class needs, and to take remedial measures.
>
> Assessment motivates the children to make more effort to learn. It makes them aware of their weaknesses.
>
> It makes me aware of how far my pupils have digested what I have taught, and of whether I need to change the way I teach.
>
> It encourages children's effort, and self-concept, and acts as a reward for their effort.

Also notable is the low percentage of those rejecting assessment (4.3%), as destroying the good relationships between child and teacher.

> Assessment has negative effects on the pedagogical climate and destroys good relationships between teacher and pupil, even with parents.
>
> It causes psychological problems, to the less able pupils in particular.

In addition, surprisingly, only about (3%) said that it is used for communication with parents. Also striking is the very low percentage (about 3%) of teachers who indicated that assessment is used for control. This however, was in practice a pervasive and constant classroom feature as the observational data in the next section reveal. An overall consideration of the tables 2.1, (2.2, and 2.3 appendix 2) of significant differences between the various teacher groups and their views on the assessment purposes, reveals that their views cluster round two trends. Teachers of the first trend stress the diagnostic role of assessment, its utility in

providing feedback to the teacher, in stimulating constructive competition, suggesting remediation and in motivating children's learning. They stress a somewhat intellectual aspect of assessment. The data reveal that teachers with these views were by and large male, having only the basic teaching qualification, teaching higher levels, long experienced, and at urban schools.

The second trend underlines assessment's utility for enhancing children's self-esteem, providing feedback to them, motivating their learning, and as a recognition of their effort. That is, they stress the affective role of assessment. Such teachers were mainly female, teaching lower levels, those attending the 'Maraslio' college, and with an average amount of teaching experience- a distinction which is examined later in this chapter.

8.1.2. Teacher Comments

Teachers verbally, non-verbally or in writing continually comment on children's work, effort or performance. Table 3 reveals part of the reasoning behind teachers' comments.

Table 3. Teachers' comments purposes (cases %)

Encourage effort	45.7
Feedback to pupils	25.2
Remediation	20.2
Rewards for effort	18.7
Stimulate competition	16.9
Learning Motivation	13.2
To improve performance	10.4
Strengthen self-confidence	7.4
Improve teacher/pupil relations	6.7
Inform parents	6.4
For class participation	2.8
To imitate good peers' examples	1.8
N=326	175.5

The modal response according to table 3 is that teachers comment on pupils' work and performance mainly in order to encourage their effort. Some other replies were typical:

> I comment to show them that I appreciate their effort, to encourage even more effort and to enhance their self-concept.
>
> To foster their intrinsic learning motives and to make them feel that their efforts are rewarded.
>
> I comment in writing hence I avoid pointing out mistakes in front of the class, which could hurt them. When I comment in public, in front .of the class, I aim to make the others follow or avoid the particular child's performance.
>
> To inform them about their strengths or weakness, and help them avoid similar mistakes in future.

Regarding the domains the comments relate to, affective and cognitive had about equal support (42%). The former mainly aimed to provide rewards and encouragement for effort, and to strengthen children's self-confidence. The intellectual comments aimed to provide feedback or motivation for learning, or simply to improve learning. Nearly 10% target social aspects and the remaining 6% implied managerial purposes (table 3). It is interesting to note the low percentage about 6% regarding communication to the parents.

An overall consideration of the variation between the different groups of teachers in terms of gender, academic qualifications, teaching experience, level taught, status, and school location, reveals that higher proportions of mainly female classroom teachers indicated that they comment to provide rewards and encouragement for children's effort, feedback to the pupils, and to improve the teacher/pupil relationships. Higher proportions of those teaching the first or second year, comment to stimulate competition, and to encourage and reward children's effort (tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 appendix 2).

8.1.3. Using the assessment results

Several studies have found that the use of assessment results to improve teaching and learning is a crucial part of the assessment process (Rowntree, 1977; Satterly, 1989; Airasian, 1991). Regarding the Greek case these results for years (Decrees 483/1977; 497/1981) have been used by and large for summative and informative purposes (chapter 6). Hence, teachers were questioned to see what actions they apply after assessing their pupils. Respondents were confronted with five options from which they could select more than one.

Table 4. Use of assessment results (overall %)

Just record	2.7
Inform school records	7.0
Inform parents	69.8
Individual instruction	87.3
Do not record	1.6
Other	20.3

n=369

Total percentages exceed one hundred since teachers could provide more than one answer.

As tables 4 and (4.1, appendix 2) indicate teachers used the assessment results mainly for individual teaching and to inform parents. They also use them, but less often, for whole class remedial instruction, to construct worksheets and tests, to inform the succeeding teachers, to plan the next lesson, and to assign homework, (answers included in the 'other' category).

Overall, it seems that learning and accountability were the main concerns. It must be mentioned here that individualised instruction was one of the main principles of the child-centred pedagogy which was encouraged in the official guide-lines to teachers. Thus, as they indicated, they try to apply it to a large extent. These findings imply a dual utility of the assessment results towards parents, first, for accountability, and second for communication to assist their children's learning. In general, rural, classroom, teachers with long experience, and those having only the basic teaching qualifications, indicated rather less usage of the results for individualized instruction. Perhaps pragmatic restrictions such as time, and class size prevent them from applying it more widely. Another noticeable finding is that female teachers, those having higher degrees, and long experience, as well as classroom, and rural teachers felt much more accountable to parents than their

counterparts.

To sum up, results of the four items related to the broader question 'why teachers assess?' indicated first, that they use it for a wide range of purposes, which are clustered around two trends, affective and intellectual. This variety of purposes underlines as well the general importance that teachers place on classroom assessment. Teacher comments also indicate the reasoning behind their use of classroom assessment which mainly aimed to encourage children's effort, to provide feedback to the pupils, and to stimulate competition. Overall, they mainly assess for formative purposes, and for accountability. However, one should note the very low proportion of teachers indicating that it is also used for control of children's learning and classroom behaviour. It is also important to note that these replies reflect the 'ideology' of these teachers, i.e. what they assert that they do.

8.2. ASSESSMENT IN DAILY CLASSROOM PRACTICE

In an attempt to draw a picture of 'how' the respondents said they applied assessment in their day- to- day classroom practice, they were asked about the frequency of their planning -in writing- their assessments, what sort of assessment practices they applied, in what written forms they responded to pupils' work', how often they gave teacher-made tests, whether they give homework and for what purposes, and how often they made clear to their pupils the standards involved in a 'good' piece of work.

8.2.1. Planning the assessment activities

Teachers were asked to indicate the frequency of planning their assessments in writing as another indication of the importance they place on it. For the sake of clarity and to enable the application of chi-squared tests of significance the five frequency categories: daily, often, sometimes, rarely, never, have been collapsed to

three. Cross tabulation tables 5 and (5.1, 5.2, 5.3 appendix 2) present the proportions of the teachers who selected each option.

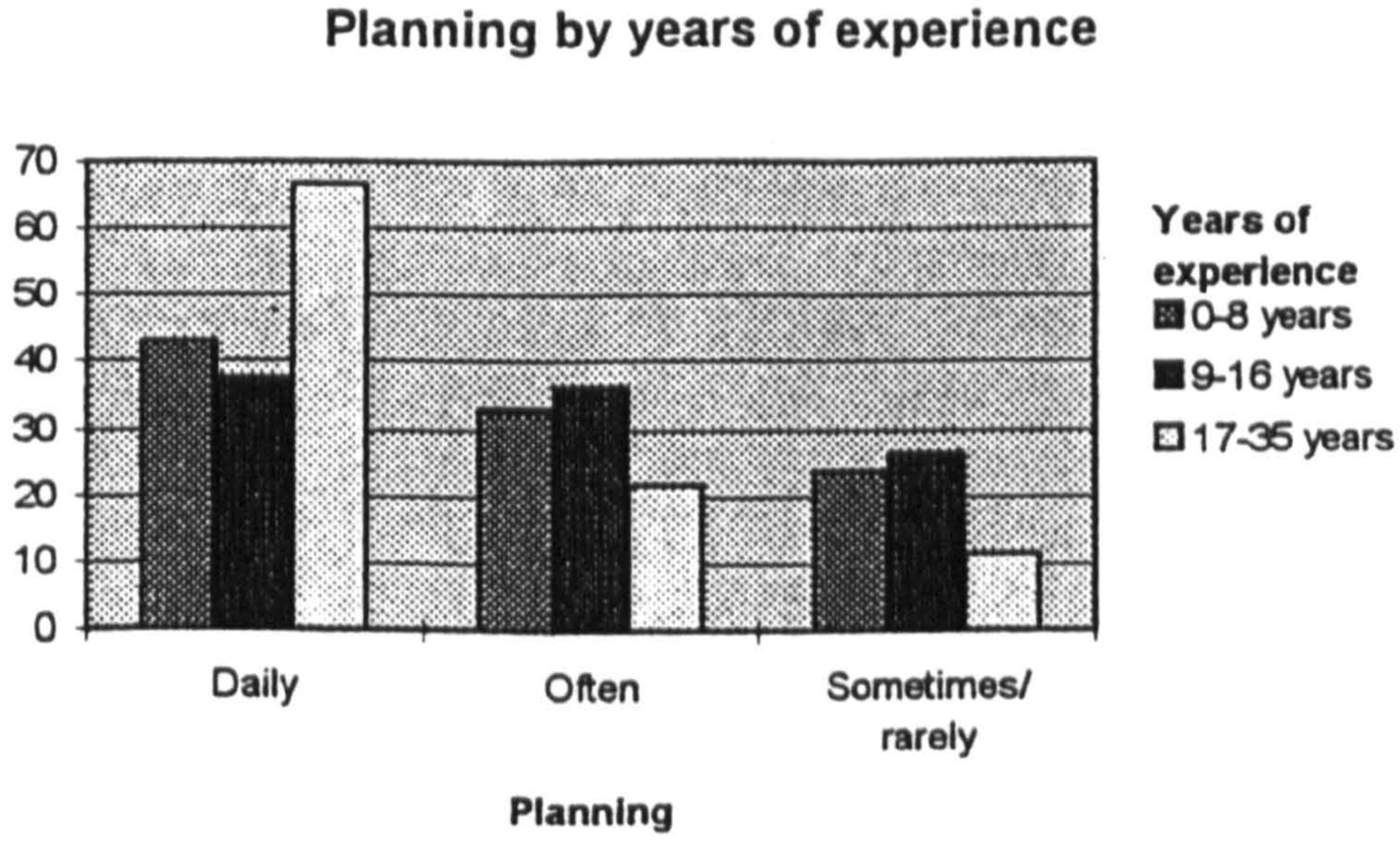
Table 5. Planning by status and overall (cases %)

	College	Classroom	Overall
Daily	38.2	22.6	44.9
Often	34.4	29.1	32.2
Sometimes/rarely	27.4	16.6	22.9
ss $x^2=10.3$ $p<.01$	n=212	n=151	N=363

Key: College refers to the 'Maraslio' College

As table 5 indicates, overall teachers appeared to plan their assessments quite often. Teachers who had only the basic teaching degree said that they plan their assessments much more frequently, on a daily basis, than teachers with a higher degree (table 5.1, appendix 2). It is noticeable that according to the 'Maraslio' college teachers they plan their assessments much more frequently than their classroom colleagues (table 5.2, appendix 2). Accordingly, the college teachers perhaps had been influenced by their post-training studies at that time. The classroom teachers on the other hand, seemed to be very busy, hence they have not time to make written plans, or perhaps do not need them.

Figure 1



Interestingly, as figure 1 shows, teachers with long experience claim that they plan much more frequently than their less experienced colleagues. Perhaps the former had realised the importance for effective teaching of carefully organising their activities on a daily basis.

About 93% of rural teachers appeared to plan their assessments frequently compared to 83% of their urban colleagues (table 5.3, appendix 2). Perhaps it is because rural teachers have to teach from two up to six different levels, which demands careful written preparation. Overall, rural, classroom, and experienced teachers tend to plan their assessment activities more frequently (figure 1, and tables 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, appendix 2).

8.2.2. Classroom assessment practices

One open-ended question gave teachers the opportunity to describe as many assessment practices they apply in the classroom as they wish. They provided 68 different categories of responses which were then grouped into 14 broader categories as summarised in table 6.

Table 6. Assessment practices by status and overall (%)

	College	Classroom	Overall
Oral questions	52.3	50.0	51.3
Worksheets, essays	32.2	30.9	31.6
Textbook tasks	33.7	26.5	30.7
Short comments	25.6	35.3	29.6
Teacher-made tests	28.6	22.1	26.0
Peer assessments	16.1	17.6	16.7
Rewards for effort	14.1	19.1	16.1
Homework	10.1	16.2	12.5
Observations	9.0	16.2	11.9
Grades	13.1	8.8	11.3
Holistic assessment	8.0	12.5	9.9
Marks	9.0	8.8	9.0
Class participation	8.5	4.4	6.9
Correction of work	4.5	5.1	4.8
	n=199	n=136	N=357

Key: Rewards for effort: Verbal, or tangible rewards such as badges, stars etc.
Holistic assessment: Assessment considering the entire personality of the child (not only academic achievements).

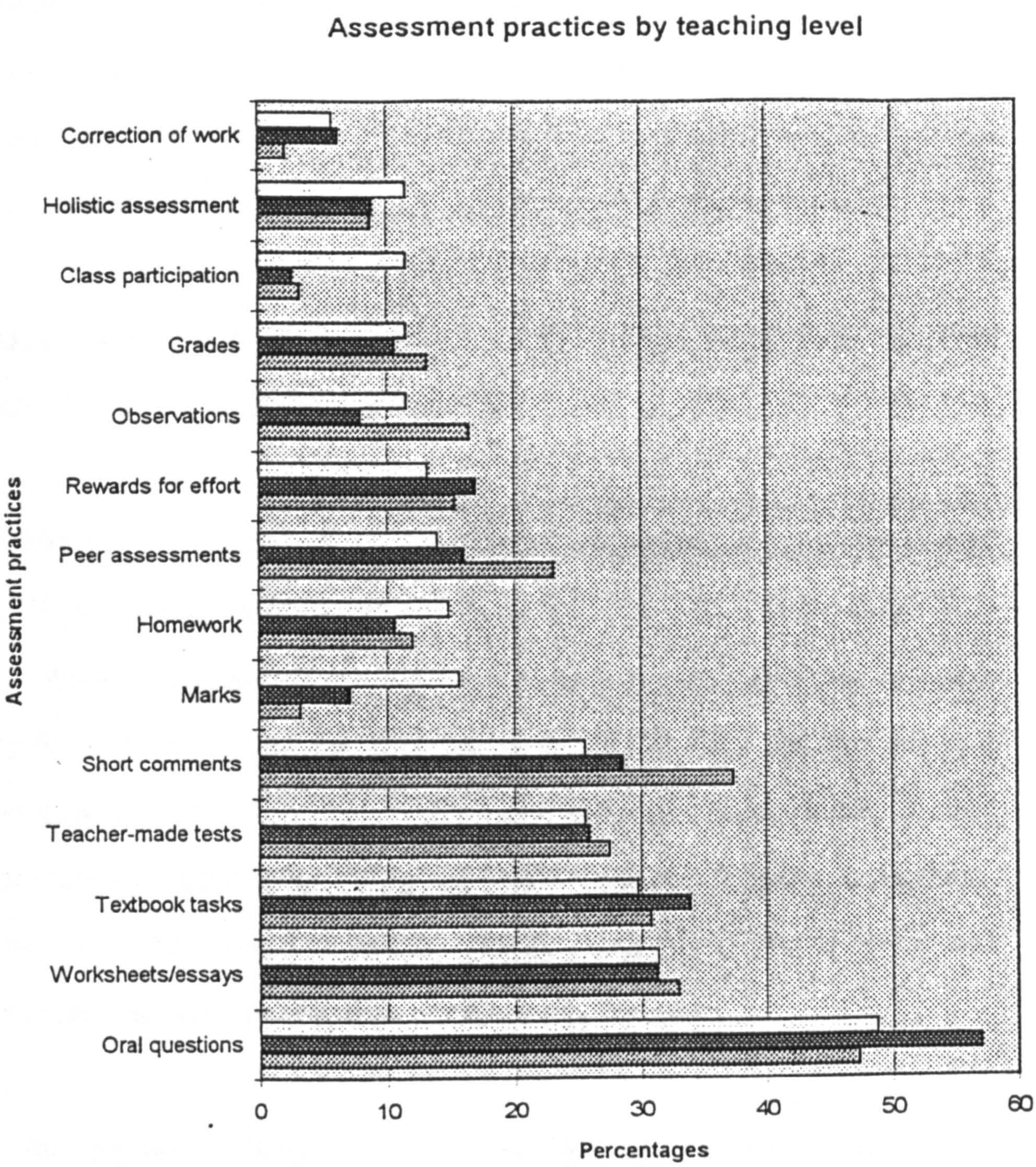
A consideration of the overall results of table 6 indicates the wide variety of assessment related practices teachers said they apply and the most common ones. Surprisingly, observation of children was mentioned by about only (12%) of the cases. Most of these practices refer to the first phase of the assessment process, i.e. evidence collection (chapter 2). The remaining, practices such as: short comments, marks, grades, rewards for effort, homework, etc. refer to the third phase of the assessment process, i.e. the teacher's response. However, because many teachers report the latter as assessment practices, this reveals the ambiguity inherent in their understanding of assessment, or the difficulty they find in articulating their

thoughts.

Interestingly, a case-by-case analysis revealed that nearly (72%) of the teachers provided more than three practices. This is an indication among others of how pervasive and how important is classroom assessment, as well as the various functions it serves. These findings are directly related to the study's questions regarding the importance of classroom assessment, and provide evidence of the current practice.

Regarding textbook tasks, grades, and teacher-made tests a larger proportion (by about 7%) of the 'Maraslio' college teachers mentioned them compared with their classroom colleagues (table 6). However, this pattern was reversed as far as short comments, rewards for effort, observations, holistic assessment, and homework were concerned. This table reflects the reality since the primary classroom teachers are subject to various pressures of time, class size, and the curriculum on the one hand, thus they mostly observe, and apply short comments, and homework. On the other hand, the social and affective nature of the teaching profession is reflected by the practices of 'holistic assessments' and 'rewards for effort'.

Figure 2



Some important differences appeared in figure 2. First, there was one of nearly 10% between the middle level teachers in relation to oral questions compared to the other two groups. Short comments were mentioned by about 37% of the lower levels teachers compared to about 29% and 26% respectively of the other two levels.

Observations were mentioned by 16.5% of the first level teachers compared to 8% of the middle and 11.6% of the higher levels. This might be because in the lower

levels pupils cannot produce much written academic work for assessment, such as essays, spelling, arithmetic problems and the like, hence observation is the main assessment approach. Another explanation could be that the teachers of the lower levels may take more account of the social and affective children aspects, not just academic ones, evidence for which is mainly collected through observation.

Peer assessment seemed to be more a practice of the younger levels 23% compared with 16% and 14% of the other two respectively.

Rewards for effort were indicated by a much higher proportion of long experienced teachers 21.7% than their colleagues, 13.2% and 16.3% respectively (table 6.1, appendix 2). Another interesting finding of this table is that 'observations' were mentioned by 9.2% of the middle teachers, by 11.7% of the older teachers but by a higher proportion of new teachers 15.7%. Perhaps the older teachers used assessment practices or instruments other than observations. Holistic assessment, and homework, were mentioned by roughly similar percentages 9% of young and middle experienced teachers, but by about 16% of older teachers.

In general, the picture which eventually emerged shows that typically the application of the 14 mentioned practices follow the same pattern throughout the pairs of the various teacher groups. However, some differences appeared between the groups (tables 6.1, 6.2, appendix 2, and figure 2).

Observations, compared to other practices, were mentioned by rather small proportions. However, new teachers of the lower levels, classroom and rural were the ones who mainly mentioned it. Homework and holistic assessments were mostly indicated by rural, long experienced and classroom teachers. Short comments were indicated by higher percentages of classroom, who had a basic degree, and the rural teachers. Rewards for effort were used mainly by the rural,

classroom, and long experienced teachers. Oral questions were mentioned more by rural and the middle level teachers. Urban and the 'Maraslio' college teachers mainly mentioned textbook tasks. Those attending the 'Maraslio' college, male and those teaching higher levels mainly used grades or marks.

8.2.3. Teacher's written responses on pupil's work

Teachers' written comments on children's work is a common aspect of assessment that arguably influence learning. Thus, it was of interest to see what written forms such comments take. Responses were arranged in four wider categories which included the most common answer plus something 'other' which teachers appeared to select, i.e. at times marks, grades, short or detailed comments concerning the strengths or deficiencies of the child's work.

Table 7. Teacher response by school location & overall(%)

	Urban	**Rural**	**Overall**
Marks+other	55.0	37.5	44.6
Grades+other	14.3	6.3	14.8
Short comments+other	21.4	43.8	26.3
Detailed comments+other	5.0	6.3	7.3
Other	4.3	6.3	7.0
ns	n=140	n=16	N=372

According to table 7 overall, marks and short comments often accompanied by something else appeared to be the typical written responses on pupils' work. Detailed comments, on the contrary, were reported rather rarely. The 'other' option included responses such as: "percentage of correct answers", "a fraction of the correct answers out of the total", symbols such as "a tick (V), or an exclamation mark (!), or (+), for correct answers, and an (x), or (-), or question mark (?) for incorrect ones", "I underline their mistakes". "I draw a smiley face

under the correct work, or an angry one under the incorrect".

Interestingly, table 7 indicates that 'marks+other' is used much more by urban teachers than their rural colleagues, though they both apply 'grades+other', 'detailed comments', or 'other' sorts in balanced proportions. Another noticeable difference refers to the use of 'short comments' -used twice as much by rural teachers than by their urban counterparts.

Table 7.1 Written responses by teacher status (%)

	College	Classroom
Marks+other	38.7	52.9
Grades+other	15.7	13.5
Short comments+other	28.1	23.9
Detailed comments+other	8.8	5.2
Other	8.8	4.5
ss $x^2=10.03$ $p<.05$	n=217	n=155

Also interesting is the higher use of marks about (14% more) by the classroom teachers in comparison to the 'Maraslio' teachers. However, more college teachers appeared to use short comments than the classroom teachers (table 7.1).

Nearly 14% more teachers with a basic teaching degree compared with their colleagues holding a higher degree gave 'marks+other' to their pupils (table 7.2, appendix 2).

A much higher proportion of the more experienced teachers make use of marks and grades than do their younger colleagues. Moreover, very similar proportions 7% of the three groups seem to use detailed comments (table 7.3, appendix 2).

In general, according to tables 7 to 7.3 'marks+other' were mentioned mainly by teachers holding the basic degree, male, teaching middle levels, with the longest experience and working in urban schools. 'Grades+other' were indicated mostly by the long experienced teachers, and those with a higher degree. Female, rural, those working with lower levels, young and 'Maraslio' teachers by and large used 'short comments+other'. Detailed comments and 'other' forms were indicated mainly by the male, and those teachers teaching higher levels.

Observational data provide illustrative examples of such written comments found on children's work, and convey explanations of observed teachers' views. In general, the wide use of marks according to the set of tables 7 to 7.3 is a notable and unexpected finding since marks have been statutorily discontinued long before the data collection for this study (chapter 6). This raises the question of how far policy is implemented. Detailed comments were reported to be used rather rarely, though according to the literature they positively influence children's learning. Perhaps 'pragmatic' constraints such as time and class size force the majority of teachers to use short comments. In addition, they may use marks so often, first, because they grown accustomed to this system after using it for so long, and second, because they believe that children and parents understand it. Also of interest is the variety of the 'other' sorts of responses which reveals several codes of the assessment language used. The assessment language reflects the various functions of the underlying issue of teachers' assessment ideology.

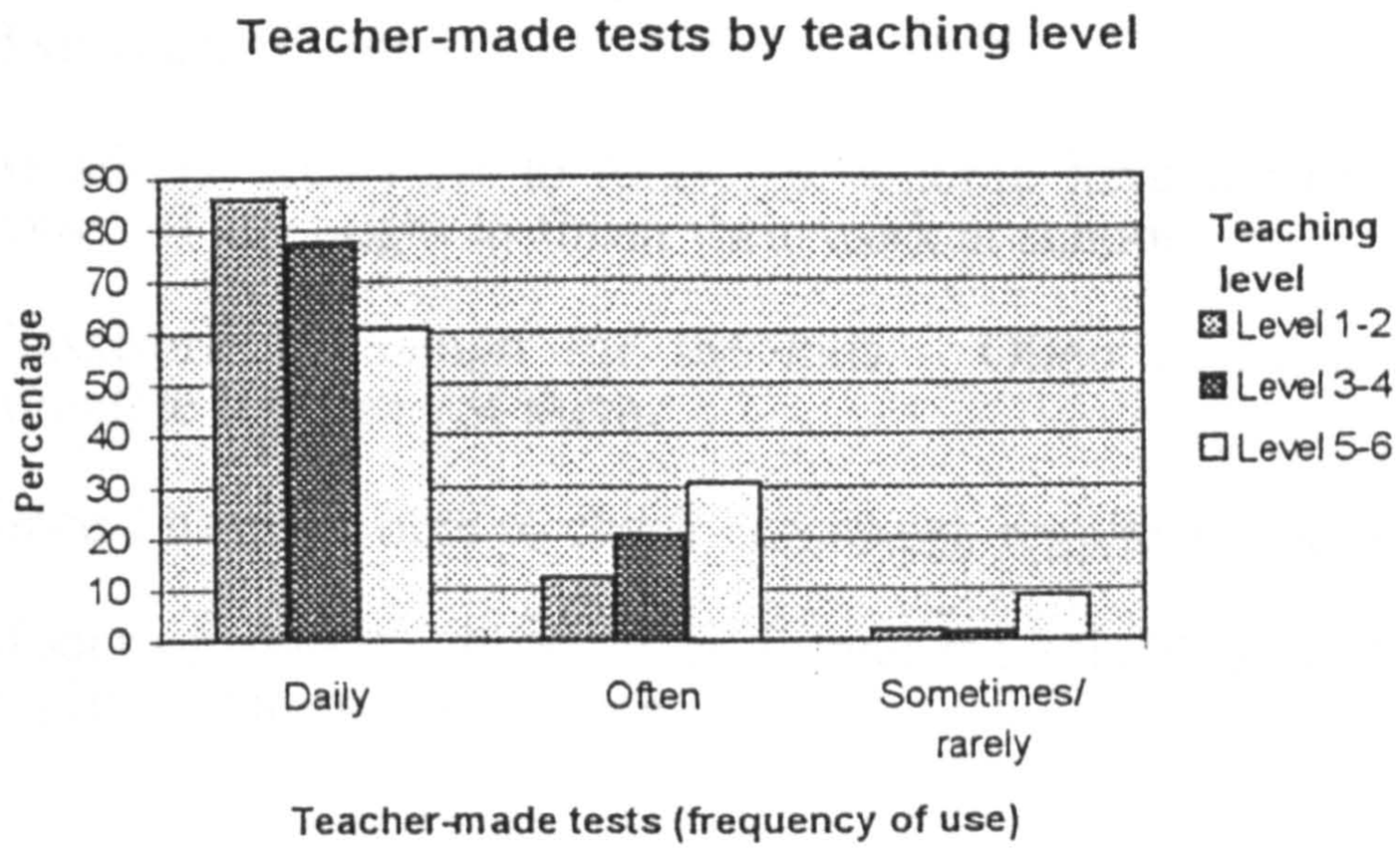
8.2.4. Using teacher-made tests

The importance teachers place on instruments they themselves construct was examined. Table 8 and figure 3 depict the responses. Teachers had to indicate the frequency of giving teacher-made tests by choosing one of the options: daily, often, sometimes, rarely, never. These five categories were collapsed to three for chi-squared tests and cross tabulations application.

Table 8. Teacher-made tests by gender, overall (cases %)

	Male	**Female**	**Overall**
Daily	61.5	83.2	72.8
Often	31.3	14.2	22.4
Sometimes/rarely	7.3	2.6	4.9
ss $x^2=22.8$ $p<.01$	n=179	n=190	N=371

Figure 3



Teachers typically appeared to place considerable weight on their own tests (table 8, and figure 3), since they use them so frequently. However, it is interesting that the female teachers and those teaching the lower levels (figure 3), claimed that they give such test much more often than their colleagues, even on a daily basis.

8.2.5. Homework

Homework is a part of teaching that often follows assessments in order to provide both remedial measures for deficiencies and consolidation of the curriculum content. Moreover, homework first, is itself 'evidence' for assessment (the first phase of the assessment process). Second, teachers get feedback regarding how far the individual pupil has digested the taught material, and when they check it they provide feedback to the pupil of how well they have done, and how and where s/he needs to improve.

One item asked whether teachers give homework or not, and for a justification of their decision. Those who replied positively were also asked about the frequency of checking it. Table 9 summarises the results. Although the vast majority of respondents (88.8%) were in favour of assigning homework, it has to be noted that such a practice was against the official directives of that time, which raises again the question of the extent of policy implementation. Each group had 'good' reasons to support their opinions. Those rejecting homework (11.2%) for instance, provided such arguments:

> As adults need time to relax, so children have the right to play at home. They ought to finish their work at school.
>
> Classwork is enough for the kids. Often at home the parents complete it instead of them.
>
> Since I have no time to check homework regularly, I avoid giving it.
>
> Modern pedagogy discourages it, and the school adviser told us not to give homework any more.

On the contrary, teachers who were in favour of homework provided the following reasons for its value as table 9 reports.

Table 9 Homework purposes	(cases %)
To consolidate learning	95.6
Preparation for the next lesson	28.1
To complete unfinished school work	19.7
To develop investigative practices	15.6
No homework	10.8
To learn independent working	7.1
To assess their work	6.4
To involve parents in learning	2.4
n=295	185.8

Consolidation of learning was the major justification. This was followed by those arguing that it is a means in which children collect information and prepare for the next lesson, or complete remaining school work (table 9). Here are some typical reasons given by teachers:

> That way they have a chance to reconsider the taught material, to practise, to revise, in other words to consolidate it.
>
> With homework the children get used to work independently at home in a familiar setting at their own pace.
>
> Because school time is not sufficient.
>
> Homework fosters their autonomy and they become more diligent.

Nearly twice as big a proportion of the basically qualified teachers as that of their counterparts see homework as helping children work independently. About 8% more of those with a higher degree reported that homework fosters investigative practices to the pupils. Crosstabulations showed that teachers who are male, teaching higher levels, more experienced, classroom, and teach in rural schools, are those who mainly rejected giving homework compared with their colleagues. Perhaps the children at the rural schools in particular do have the time to carry out extra work in class, while the teacher teaches the other levels, thus they do not take work home.

Regarding the different groups of teachers, (tables 9.1 and 9.2, appendix 2) 'consolidation of learning' was mentioned by much higher proportions of the male, young, classroom, and urban teachers compared with their counterparts within each group. More female, young and urban teachers indicated that they give homework to complete unfinished school work. Its utility as preparation for the next lesson was indicated mostly by the urban, the female, the long experienced, and the classroom teachers. The older teachers suggested its utility as fostering investigative skills. The classroom teachers mostly claimed that it helps children to learn working independently.

Overall, one should note first, the consistency of the pattern of teachers views regarding homework throughout the different groups, and second, the variety of purposes that homework is said to serve.

8.2.5.1. Checking Homework

It is interesting that the pattern of the daily checking frequency decreases as the teaching levels increase (table 10). Perhaps this is because the younger children are keener to show the teacher their work every day, compared with the older children; or because in the lower levels daily checking is important until the children become aware of the standards of work. The fact that fewer teachers of the higher levels claimed to make daily checks on homework is a truer reflection of the classroom reality.

Table 10 Checking homework by status (cases %)

	College	Classroom
Daily	79.3	65.2
Often	19.8	29.0
Sometimes/rarely	.9	5.8
ss $x^2=12.9$ $p<.01$	n=217	n=155

Overall, the large majority of teachers said that they check children's homework daily, or quite often. However, the teachers who were male, the classroom teachers, those with basic qualifications, and the most experienced (table 10.1, appendix 2), followed a consistent pattern of checking homework, on a daily basis, (nearly 10%) less often than their colleagues. These views seemed to be closer to the reality of the classroom given teachers' complaints about shortage of time that they expressed in other items.

8.2.6. Stating standards of work quality

The need for pupils to be aware of the accepted standards of 'good' or 'poor' work (Broadfoot, 1987; Sadler 1989), and of ways to improve, is obviously important. This inspired an item asking teachers how often they made clear to their pupils in advance the criteria of a good or poor piece of work.

Table 11. Stating standards by status & overall (%)

	College	Classroom	Overall
Daily	39.7	26.3	34.2
Often	29.9	28.3	29.2
Sometimes/rarely	30.4	45.4	36.6
ss $x^2=10.2$ $p<.01$	n=214	n=152	N=366

When pooling 'daily' and 'often' it appears that teachers claimed a fairly frequent communication of standards to their children, although observational data contradicted this. An overall consideration of the variation between the different groups of teachers reveals that the classroom teachers, the most experienced, those with basic qualifications, and the urban ones, expressed more realistic views by indicating that they state the standards less often i.e. 'sometimes or rarely' to their pupils, than did the rest of their colleagues (tables 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, app. 2).

Overall, the above items provided some indications regarding 'how' classroom assessment is applied in a typical Greek primary classroom. Teachers reported a great variety of evidence collection practices. They used several written forms to give feedback to the pupils, ranging from simple symbols, marks and short comments to specific detailed comments. All these are elements of the assessment language. However, the mode was short comments often accompanied with a mark or a grade. The importance that teachers placed on the tests they themselves make and trust was also reflected. It is interesting the wide use of marks and homework

although officially they both had been discontinued. This raises the questions of how far policies can be imposed, and why teachers rejected them.

The main impression deriving from these findings is that classroom assessment is a very complex enterprise which is realized through various interrelated aspects. In general, it seemed that teaching level, teacher qualifications and experience are among the main factors which to a greater or less degree influence the assessment operation.

8.3. WHAT TO ASSESS?

The researcher attempted to get some insights into 'what' teachers look for, when they assess their pupils, through two items regarding the frequency of assessing different subjects and the spectrum of pupils' characteristics which teachers mainly assess. The weight teachers put on to different subjects in terms of the frequency with which they assess them is depicted in tables 12 to 12.4.

8.3.1. Assessing different subjects

Table 12 Assessing different subjects overall frequency (%)

N=170	Daily	often	sometimes/rarely
Reading	58.9	34.2	6.8
Maths	62.5	34.0	3.5
Writing	63.4	29.8	6.8
Science	24.1	35.5	40.4
Aesthetics	9.7	21.1	59.2

Overall, tables 12 and (12.1, 12.2, 12.3, 12.4, appendix 2) indicate the importance of the basics for the teachers. Of course one has to bear in mind that according to the Greek National curriculum for the primary school these core subjects are given much more time than the others (chapter 6, table 1). This is somewhat at variance

with the official education rhetoric at that time (Law 1566, 1985) which was aiming at a more 'progressive' approach in an attempt to balance the merit of all subjects, by upgrading environmental studies, aesthetics and the like. However, all groups of teachers consistently follow similar patterns of assessing the different subjects placing more weight on the three R's and less on say, science, or aesthetics. Regarding aesthetics in particular, the female teachers those who were at the 'Maraslio' college, the lower level and the rural were more keen in assessing it.

8.3.2. What children's traits do teachers assess?

An important issue concerning the content of teachers' assessments is the revelation of those particular characteristics teachers regard as most important when they assess. This in turn might lead a reader to deeper considerations regarding teachers' beliefs about educational objectives, pedagogy and educational philosophy. One item provided a variety of 26 children's traits from which the teachers had to choose the five most important when they assess (table 13).

Table 13. Pupils' traits teachers look for (cases %)

Critical ability	70.3	Skills	13.9
Participation	53.2	Maturity	12.8
Creativity	49.6	Persistence	7.1
Effort	49.0	Independence	6.2
Industry	46.6	Tidiness	5.0
Cooperation	37.7	Retention	4.5
Knowledge	31.2	Kindness	3.0
Self-confidence	24.0	Quietness	2.7
Imagination	19.6	Discipline	2.1
Behaviour	16.3	Patience	1.8
Honesty	15.4	Obedience	.6
Intelligence	15.1	Appearance	.3
Attention	14.5	Other	.3

The findings of table 13 can be classified in various ways. Regarding pedagogy for instance, it seems that its orientation is traced by the traits critical ability, class participation, industry and knowledge which in total lead to the so called 'traditional' pedagogy (Bennett, 1976; Jasman, 1987). This, as has been said, differs from the official educational philosophy of that time which aspired to be 'progressive', offering more freedom to the learner, fostering creativity and in more respects treating the child as an adult, not as a pupil (Berlak & Berlak, 1981).

Another categorisation of these findings could be made by using as a criterion the 'domains' within which the preferred traits are clustering. It is obvious that most of the 'popular' traits like critical ability, knowledge, creativity, intelligence and imagination fall within the 'cognitive' domain. However, from the remaining traits 'affective' characteristics such as children's effort, independence, industry, attention, cooperation with the teacher and classmates, class participation, frankness and self-confidence, eventually took the first place of teachers preference. Regarding the psychomotor domain it seemed that skills, and behaviour were the most important traits included. Tables 13.1 to 13.4 show how important these traits are for the different groups of teachers. Since knowledge and co-operation appeared in high proportions the researcher decided to report them as well. Hence the following analyses by gender, qualifications, teaching level, teaching experience, status, and school location include seven traits.

Table 13.1 Traits by qualifications (cases %)

	Basic	**Higher**
Critical ability	74.7	68.5
Class participation	55.6	46.6
Creativity	33.3	56.3
Effort	43.4	51.3
Industry	52.5	44.1
Co-operation	31.3	40.3
Knowledge	40.4	27.3
	n=99	n=238

Table 13.1 reports some important differences. First, about 10% more teachers with the basic qualification mentioned industry, class participation, knowledge and critical ability, compared to their counterparts. Creativity, effort, and co-operation however, were mentioned by more than 10% of the more qualified teachers which imply a rather progressive pedagogy. As table (13.2, appendix 2) shows 5% more female teachers assess their pupil's effort compared to the male ones. However, nearly 10% more male teachers said that they assess children's co-operation and class participation.

Figure 4

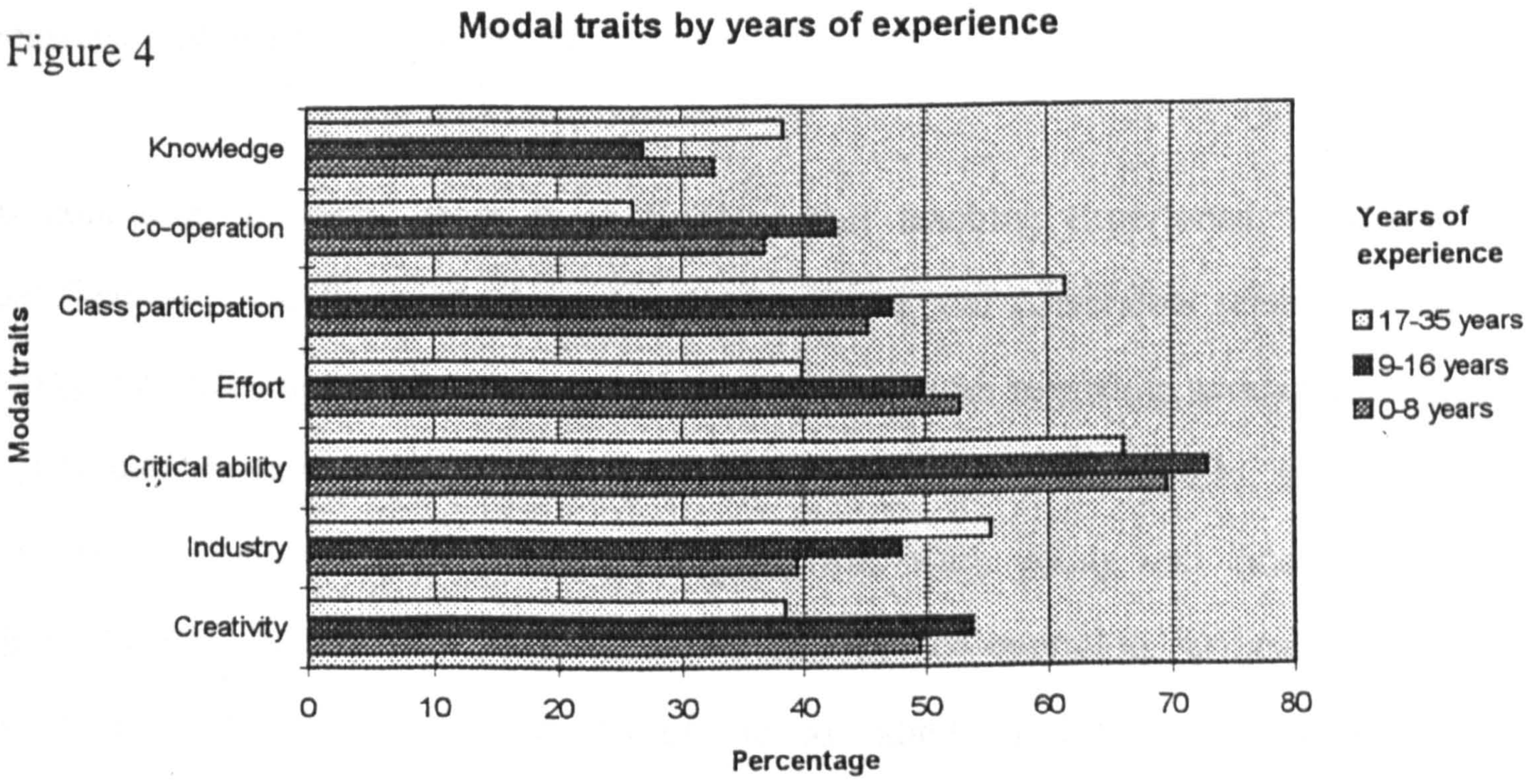


Figure 4 presents very significant findings. First, the most experienced teachers, not surprisingly, indicated that they are more interested in children's class participation, and industry, but considerably less in their creativity, knowledge or effort, when compared with the other two groups of younger teachers.

Children's effort were mentioned by about 10% more of the younger and middle experienced teachers compared to the most experienced teachers. Higher percentages of the average experienced teachers however mentioned creativity, critical ability and co-operation than did their colleagues in the other groups.

As was expected, much higher percentages of classroom teachers than the 'Maraslio' college ones mentioned class participation, industry, and knowledge (table 13.3, appendix 2). Far more of the 'Maraslio' college teachers, on the other hand, preferred creativity, co-operation and effort. However, critical ability was mentioned by the highest percentages of both groups, equally (about 70%) in both cases.

Urban teachers appeared to be more 'traditional' than the rural ones, since much higher percentages of them chose industry, class participation, critical ability, and knowledge, compared to the rural ones, while a smaller proportion mentioned creativity (table 13.4, appendix 2).

To conclude, it seems from these findings that teaching experience, academic qualifications, and the particular school's conditions and constraints seemed to be among the main factors that determined teachers' attitudes regarding assessment and in part their pedagogy or their ideology. These findings in particular, show that teachers who were at the 'Maraslio' college, who were young and those with a higher degree, mainly look at children's creativity, co-operation, critical ability, and effort. All these are elements of the so called child-centred, progressive

pedagogy. Classroom teachers, those with only the basic teaching degree, and the more experienced ones tend to assess children's class participation, knowledge, critical ability and industry, which are elements of a rather traditional pedagogy.

Overall, according to the above items regarding the orientation of teachers' assessments two main points can be drawn. First, that the teachers studied aimed to promote the basics, and second, that teachers' views followed two trends, a progressive and a rather traditional one, indicated by the combination of children's traits that they mainly look for.

8.4. PROBLEMS IN APPLYING CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT

8.4.1. Assessment restrictions

Teachers were asked to indicate the restrictions they face in implementing their assessments, in an attempt to discover any rationales on which they base assessment related views. Tables 14 and (14.1 to 14.3, appendix 2) summarise the results.

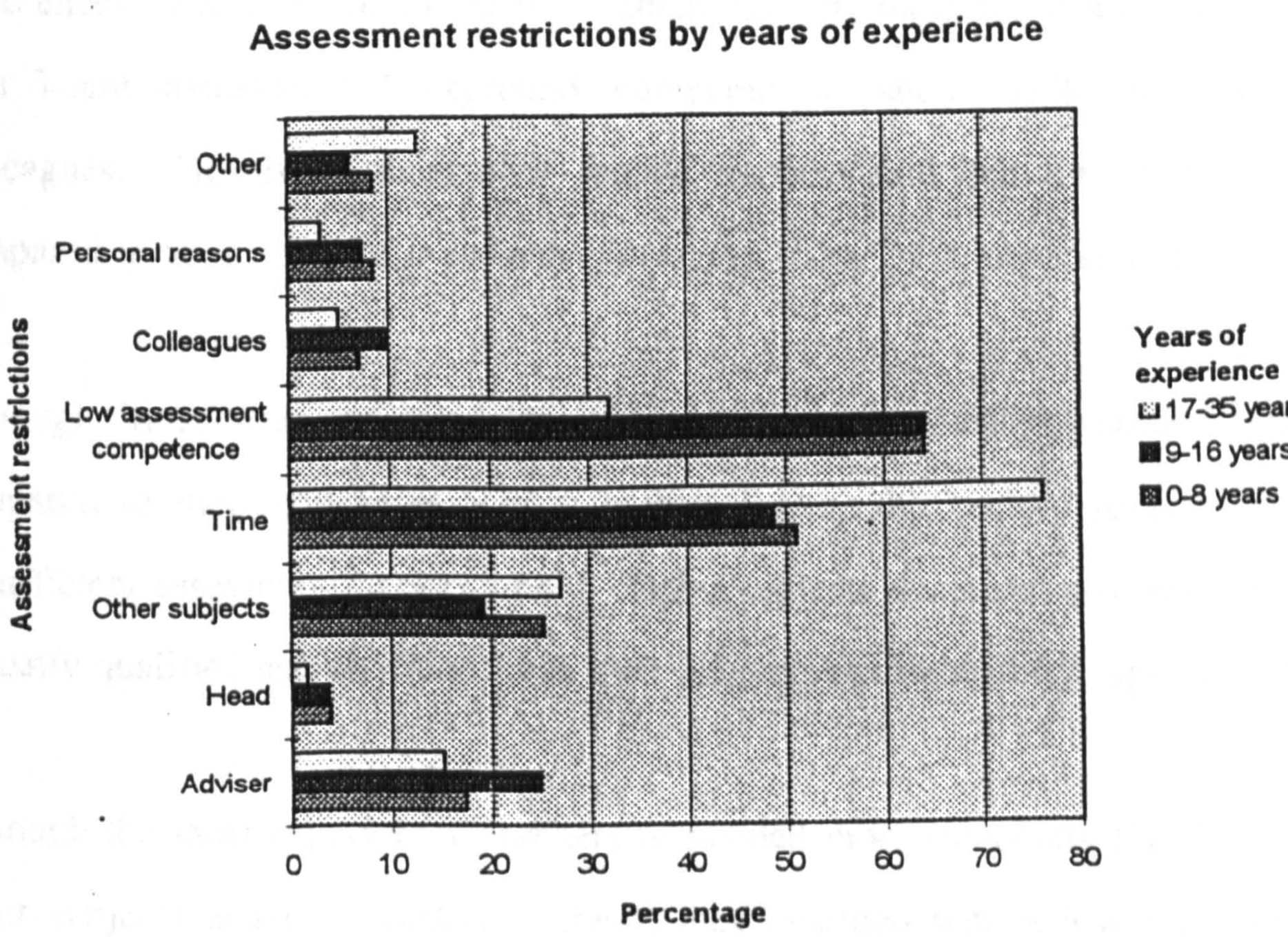
Table 14 Assessment restrictions by status and overall (%)

	College	Classroom	Overall
Adviser	21.0	19.9	19.1
Head	4.5	2.1	3.2
Other subjects	17.0	31.5	21.5
Time	50.0	60.7	50.5
Insuf.asmt. competence	63.0	52.7	54.6
Colleagues	10.0	5.5	7.5
Personal reasons	8.5	5.5	6.7
Other	8.1	8.8	7.8
	n=198	n=148	N=346

*Other subjects by status: ss $x^2=9.19$ $p<.01$

Key:Insuf.asmt competence=insufficient assessment competence

Figure 5



Overall, figure 5 and tables 14 to 14.3 show that shortage of time was the major obstacle which teachers said that they face. Their assessing time is reduced by 'other subject demands'. 'Insufficient assessment competence' took second place. Teachers also felt some pressure from the school adviser, but not from the headteacher.

The 'other' category of restrictions included replies such as: "The frequent decrees which abolish, amend or impose new assessment procedures, and which are not accompanied with adequate instructions to the teachers", "I am autonomous, I don't feel any restriction", "The class size", "The idea that assessment hurts the pupil", "I count the individual pupil's personality and I assess accordingly, i.e. I'm more lenient towards the weak pupils and more strict towards abler ones", "The conflicting views of several scholars regarding assessment".

Comparisons between the different groups of teachers show some interesting differences. For instance, about 56% female teachers indicated as a restriction their insufficient assessment background compared to about 62% of their male colleagues. However, about 58% female teachers said that time restricts them compared to about 50% of their male colleagues (table 14.1, appendix 2).

Although 'time' was indicated by about 10% more basically qualified teachers compared to their colleagues with a higher degree, this pattern reverses for the 'insufficient assessment background'. 'Other subjects demands' also restricted the basically qualified teachers more than their counterparts (table 14.2, appendix 2).

Although the most experienced teachers responded more frequently that 'time' and 'other subjects demands' restricted them, they emerged with a lower proportion, compared to the remaining groups, on 'insufficient assessment competence' and the 'adviser' (figure 5).

About half the proportion of the rural teachers as that of the urban ones indicated that the 'adviser' or 'other subject demands' restricted their assessment decisions. However, there were about (15%) more rural teachers than urban ones who said that 'time' and 'insufficient assessment competence' restricted them (table 14.3, appendix 2).

In general, the results of tables 14 to 14.3 are directly linked with the study's questions. In the first place they indicate likely reasons for the extent of the gap between the present situation and the 'optimal' assessment application (according to the literature). Secondly, they are related to the question of 'what is needed to improve the situation', i.e. teachers' assessing competence, and provision of processes and instruments that can be completed quickly. These results are also related to the question of the importance of assessment, since teachers indicated their need for learning how to do it more effectively. It also seems from this table that the Government was unable to 'police the implementation' (Broadfoot, 1992) of their policies adequately by their agents, here the adviser and the headteacher. The observational data which follow provide more evidence for all these.

In the light of these findings some interesting questions emerge. What implications do these restrictions have on teaching and learning? and what can be done to improve the situation. Shortage of time means less teaching time, less time for help to the individual pupil, less time for assessing effectively, e.g. to apply differentiated assessments. Solutions could include, extension of teaching time, or providing the teachers with a bank of assessment equipment e.g. tests, check-lists, etc., that are not time consuming.

The other major obstacle, 'insufficient assessment competence', could be reduced by a combination of measures, such as: measurement modules in the initial and in-

service training curricula, clear assessment instructions through circulars to the teachers, in-school training, etc.

However, the research evidence persuades the investigator that it is not the 'time' but the difficulty teachers find in understanding and using assessment effectively that is the fundamental obstacle. The solution therefore, is not to give them more time but more training.

8.4.2. Which factors influence teacher assessments?

In an attempt to discover how teachers reach their decisions they were asked to indicate in a five point scale how much influence they feel is exerted on them by the headteacher, the adviser, parents, their colleagues, the curriculum or any other factor.

Table 15. Factors influencing teachers' assessments (%)

	No	Little	Some	Sufficient	Much	Great
Head	86	5	5	4	-	-
Adviser	45	14	20	15	4	2
Parents	54	23	19	2	2	-
Colleagues	61	17	15	7	-	-
Curriculum	24	20	15	18	14	9
Other	7	13	9	9	17	45

As table 15 shows the headteacher seemed to exert very little influence. But more than half of the respondents report that they felt considerable influence from the school adviser. Influence from parents and colleagues seems to balance and is rather small. On the other hand, the curriculum and 'other' factors, seemed to

place considerable pressure on their evaluative decisions.

Responses included in the 'other' factors are of major significance. They relate to: the teacher's experience and the pedagogical trends of a given period; teachers' studies and reading; the quality of the class; the nature of the lesson; the individual abilities and progress of the children; their effort and attitudes; the entire personality of the children; their behaviour within and outside the classroom; problems in children's family or health; their family socioeconomic background, in terms of chances for support at home; and the particular school circumstances.

These findings indicate that these teachers typically based their judgements on the children's social and affective background and less to their scholastic achievements and performance. This tendency implies a child centred pedagogy, and the teachers' autonomy, i.e. the trend to act independently from administrative (head, adviser) factors, or the parents. It seems from the latter that the teachers' personal ideology is the main factor that determines their assessment decisions.

For the sake of clarity and to assist the application of chi-squared tests, the five categories of influence have been collapsed in the following tables into three: 'no influence' 'little influence' and 'sufficient influence'. Tables 15.1 and (15.2 to 15.8, appendix 2) reflect the extent of influence that some factors exert on teachers.

Table 15.1 Adviser's influence by degrees & overall (%)

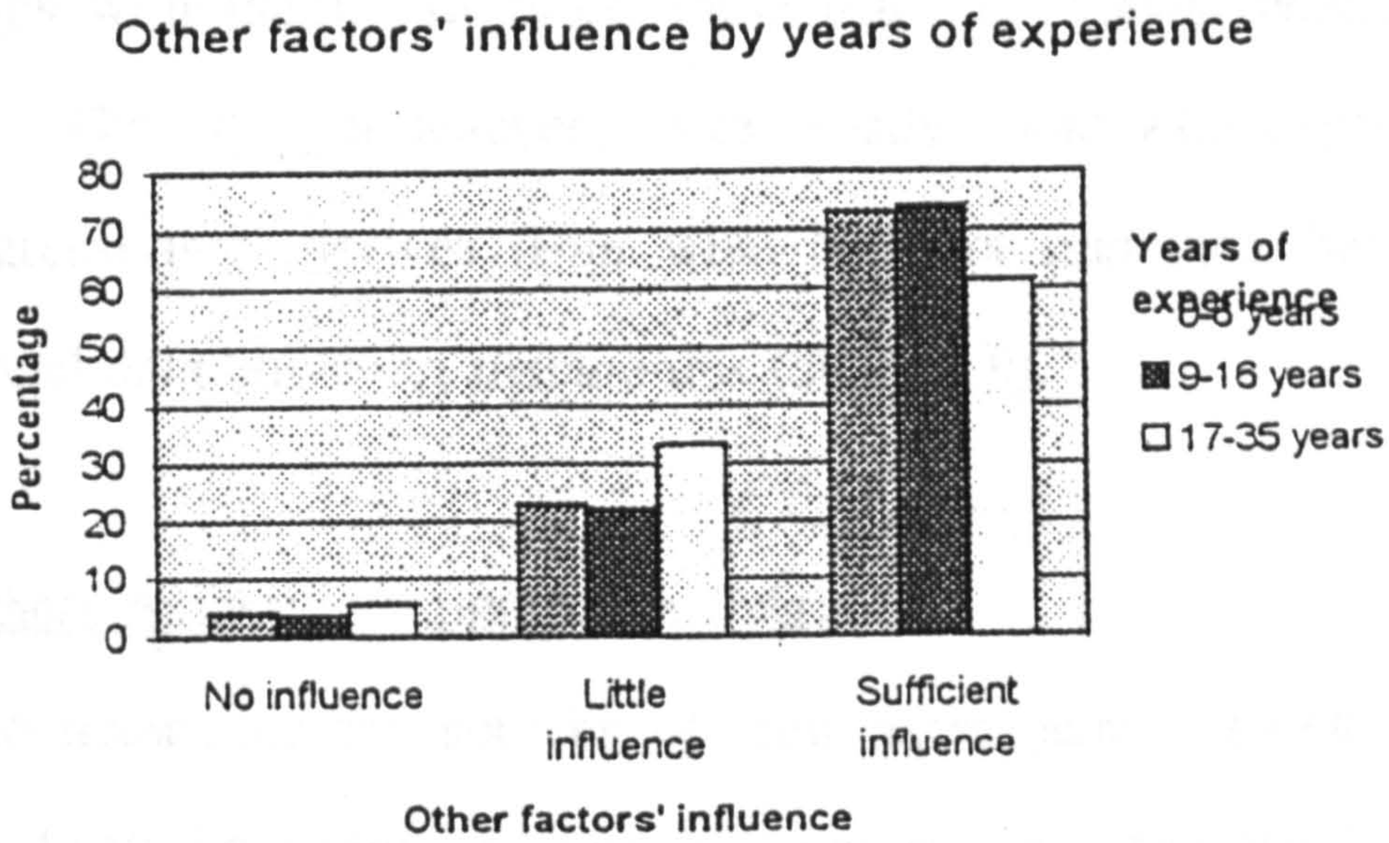
	Basic	**Higher**	**Overall**
No influence	43.8	60.1	55.1
Little influence	37.1	26.1	29.5
Sufficient influence	19.1	13.8	15.4
ss x^2=6.63 p<.05	n=89	n=203	N=292

8.4.2.1. Other factors

Table 16. Other factors' influence by gender, overall (%)

	Male	**Female**	**Overall**
No influence	3.3	5.1	4.2
Little influence	21.7	25.4	24.2
Sufficient influence	75.0	69.5	71.7
	n=60	n=59	N=120

Figure 6



Overall, according to figure 6 and tables 16 and (16.1, appendix 2) 'other' factors, the curriculum and the adviser, in order of importance, seem to exert the greater influence on teachers' assessment decisions.

The curriculum appeared to have more influence on the male, older, urban teachers, and those teaching higher levels compared to their counterparts. Classroom teachers, the older ones, those teaching the younger pupils, and the basically qualified appeared to be more influenced by the adviser. Interestingly, the head exerted minimal influence.

In general, these views reflect the teachers' trend for 'autonomy' in deciding themselves what and how to assess, by ignoring, up to a point, factors external to the class, such as the head, the adviser, parents, or their colleagues. It also seems that these teachers typically do not perceive themselves merely as 'scholastic evaluators' but persons with a much wider social and 'affective' role. Therefore, they place more weight on such things as attitudes and feelings, and on children's socioeconomic biographies (Pollard, 1985). It could be said that these views reflect a sort of 'maternal' attitude towards the children. The teachers' interest on children's personal world reveals how much they count the fostering of good relationships with them. In short, these teachers' views indicate a child-centred pedagogy. The younger teachers were mostly those who expressed such views. This 'progressivism' derives from what teachers said that they believe and do. Observational data however, dispute this (chapter 9).

8.5. Teachers Assessing Competence Origin

In order to determine the sources of their assessment competence teachers were asked to indicate how they had learned to assess, by selecting from these options: during initial training; by discussing with colleagues; from experience, i.e. without instruction; or from any other. They could select more than one options. Their overall responses are reported in tables 17.

Table 17. Assessing competence by degree & overall (%)

	Basic	**Higher**	**Overall**
During studies+Other	6.5	14.8	12.4
From colleagues+Other	3.3	6.0	5.2
From experience+Other	90.2	79.2	82.4
ns	n=92	n=216	N=308

Table 17 suggests that the majority of these teachers rely mainly on their own

experience when assessing their pupils, rather than what was provided in their initial training. This is considered by the researcher as a significant issue for the study since it might account for practical deficiencies and inconsistencies on the part of teachers, and also, explain some of their views as reflected in other items. This item is closely associated with the study's question of 'how aware are teachers of the assessment processes and potential, since the findings reflect this competence. The 'other' category provided answers such as: 'From reading journals or books', 'I have attended a seminar', 'I remember how my teachers were assessing myself when I was a student'.

Not surprisingly, a considerably higher proportion by (about 10%) of basically qualified teachers said that they had learned to assess from experience plus another source, than did their colleagues with a higher degree, who, however, to nearly twice the extent, gave the credit to their studies (table 17).

As it was expected, the most experienced teachers provided the highest percentage of those who had learned to assess from experience, and the lowest proportion of those citing their studies.

Overall, the same pattern was followed as far as the sources of assessment competence is concerned with a slight variation across the different groups of teachers (table 17.1, appendix 2). However, it is very interesting to see that the vast majority of teachers report that they have learned to assess by experience. Therefore it is unfair to blame the teachers for deficiencies and inconsistencies in their assessment practices. The practical message is the need to provide teachers with assessment training, methods and materials.

8.6. Teachers suggestions for improvement

Teachers' suggestions in respect of improvements were considered of major

significance.

Table 18 Suggestions by qualifications and overall

	Basic	**Higher**	**Overall**
Assessment training	27.6	12.7	17.4
Parents involvement	13.8	3.2	6.4
Descriptive assessment	3.4	12.7	9.8
Holistic assessment	6.9	.0	2.2
Foster cooperative spirit	.0	11.1	7.6
More standardised tests	34.5	25.4	28.3
Encourage effort	.0	7.9	5.4
More time	24.1	33.3	30.4
Remedial classes	3.4	3.2	3.3

Owing to multiple replies percentages exceed one hundred.

Overall, table 18 highlights the restriction of time teachers feel. It also underlines their demand for assessing instruments, here standardised tests, and confirms the inadequacy they report here and elsewhere. Smaller proportions suggested more descriptive assessments, the fostering of a co-operative rather than of competitive spirit in the classroom (Crooks, 1988), and the involvement of the parents in the assessment procedures.

A striking finding from table 18 is that more than double (27.6%) the basically qualified teachers, compared to their counterparts, suggest assessment training. The question which emerges is whether the holders of a higher degree actually are competent, and do not suggest training for this reason. Another related question for future research is whether initial teacher training institutions provide assessment courses, and if so of what kind and of what duration. The suggestions of 10% plus of teachers with a higher degree (table 18), than their counterparts for more time,

descriptive assessment, fostering of a co-operative spirit and encouraging effort, are clear indicators of the progressive and child-centred pedagogy, which perhaps permeated their post-training studies.

More than 10% of the 'Maraslio' college teachers are the ones who suggest descriptive assessments, fostering a co-operative spirit, as well as standardised tests, and more time (table 18.1, appendix 2). Interestingly, nearly three times more classroom teachers (27.3%) than their other colleagues suggest training.

Interestingly, the new teachers constitute the smallest proportion (13.3%) not suggesting training, but they ask for more time, a co-operative spirit, and standardised tests. For the most part, the older teachers are the ones who suggest training, remedial classes, involving parents and encouraging effort (table 18.2, appendix 2).

8.7. Overview

The investigator attempted to articulate the insights emerging from the replies in order to formulate an answer to the main subhead of the study, 'why' teachers assess. As teachers said, they typically tend to a) consider assessment as a significant part of the teaching and learning process, b) assess mainly in order to improve children's learning, c) focus their assessments on the basics, and d) see the value of assessment as a motive for learning, a diagnostic tool, reward for children's effort, provision of feedback to both pupil and teacher, as a remediation tool and finally, as a means of enhancing children's self-concept. Overall, more than half of these teachers seemed to place the weight on 'affective' purposes. The second place was taken by the academic, and less importance was given to managerial and social purposes.

The following points help in sketching an outline of 'how' some aspects of

classroom assessment were materialised. First, the respondents typically said that they tend to plan their assessment activities fairly often. Second, it appears that teachers devise and apply a wide variety of assessment practices ranging from oral questions, (the modal one) to the rare instances of peer assessments. The data of assessment practices suggest that future investigators, instead of asking teachers to describe some of their practices, would be better advised to give them a list of clearly described practices, including the 'other' one, and to ask them to select the ones they themselves apply. Eventually, it seems necessary that teachers should be clear about the purposes for which they assess on each occasion, and then to select the appropriate for this practices.

Regarding the ways teachers respond in writing on children's work, short comments was the typical practice, (about 52%), while detailed comments were used by only 5%. Marks and grades were used quite frequently, (though the official guide-lines discouraged this), and teacher-made tests were trusted more than those imposed externally. The important issue concerning the use of assessment results, seemed to follow two trends, their use for individualised instruction, i.e. for learning; and for informing parents, i.e. for accountability.

Homework, as well as the frequency of applying and checking it, emerged as a matter of special interest, since according to the official guide-lines it had to be discontinued or at least to be limited. However, it was found that nearly 89% of the teachers gave it quite regularly and considered it as an important consequence and supplement of assessment. At the same time the rest rejected it, either because they thought it was useless or because they were not allowed to give it. Another issue studied was the establishment of 'standards' for a good or poor piece of work which teachers typically said they made clear to their pupils in most cases.

Regarding 'what do teachers assess', the importance placed on the basics was

revealed by the frequency of references to the three R's, - not surprisingly in view of their weighting in the curriculum.

The seven most important characteristics of children that teachers said they look for when they assess were: critical ability, co-operation, effort, industry, creativity, knowledge and class participation. Most of these are elements of the so called 'traditional' pedagogy.

The weakness of the system in applying and controlling its policies was verified since teachers typically report that they do not feel much influence from the head or the school adviser. Rather they were influenced by the curriculum, parents and their own beliefs.

Regarding the constraints teachers feel when assessing, shortage of time and insufficient assessment competence were found to be the predominant. This is stressed by the finding that the vast majority of the sample had no training on assessing, but had learned to assess in the field.

Teachers suggest for improvement training on assessment issues, more standardized tasks, and more teaching time. Cross tabulations across different teacher groups indicated that teaching qualifications, teaching experience, and the level they teach influence their views and practices.

Overall, these findings raised various questions such as, which are the best way to elicit teachers' assessment practices? How could be developed the most effective practices and disseminated to the teachers so that they may adapt and apply them in their particular circumstances? How teachers can be aware of the potential of classroom assessment in assisting teaching and learning, and how to apply it effectively? Which factors influence teachers' beliefs and decisions? What are the

implications for children's progress? Why did some teachers reply inconsistently to related items? How far is policy implemented in practice and how is it to be controlled?

However, these findings have to be treated with caution, since they express what teachers said, not necessarily what they actually do in their classroom. In order to cross-check the consistency of their words and deeds, the next chapter presents data from actual observations in the classroom.

CHAPTER 9: CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

Introduction

Assessment in the classroom is an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Teachers constantly assess every aspect of children's performance and attitudes, with various implications for their progress (Broadfoot, 1979; Shipman, 1983; Stiggins, 1985; Satterly, 1989; Rowntree, 1991; Airasian, 1991; Pollard et al., 1994).

Observational data which were collected as part of this study were designed to supplement the questionnaire data, and provide first hand evidence of the assessment implications on pupils expressed in their views. Such evidence was not available from the questionnaire which was addressed only to the teachers. Moreover, observational data might verify or dispute what teachers assert they do within their replies to the questionnaire, i.e. these data will indicate the gap between the rhetoric and the reality.

Observational findings are directly related to the study's questions of exploring the classroom assessment phenomenon, in terms of collecting evidence of teachers' current practice, and depicting how big is the difference to the desirable (according to the literature). Observational data also show that it is important for teachers to be aware of classroom assessment's potential to assist teaching and learning.

Since classroom interactions and assessment activities are too complex phenomena, this chapter attempts to present those observed in a rather summarised and organised manner. Data therefore are presented under the broad main questions exploring the concept of classroom assessment: why, how and what to assess. Each of these wider questions is underpined with observational data that are subdivided

for the sake of clarity in subsections concerning the various categories of assessment activities observed.

Descriptions are accompanied with illustrative quotations from teachers and pupils deriving from the field notes, and supported with reference to the relevant literature evidence discussed in previous chapters. This sort of presentation aims to enable the reader to acquire a clearer understanding of the situation, when bearing in mind the interactions that take place and the factors revealed from the discussion of the observational data.

This chapter presents findings based on the investigator's field notes gathered during one term of field work, from direct classroom observations and from discussions with pupils and teachers.

The first section describes the 'spatial context' of a typical rural and an urban Greek primary schools from those observed. The second demonstrates the process of a classroom assessment episode, and the purposes observed teachers were to fulfil through assessment. The third, longer section, deals with the actual ways that classroom assessment was implemented. The fourth examines the nature of the criteria against which teachers were assessing.

It has to be noted that teachers and pupils are not specified within the descriptions in terms of their age or sex, because the aim of the study is to explore and describe the general picture of the classroom assessment enterprise. For reasons of anonymity the teachers of the study have coded names. Hence, (T) stands for teacher, which is accompanied by a number from 1-20, since twenty teachers were observed. Pupils have also pseudonyms.

9.1. THE SPATIAL CONTEXT

The location of any particular school (Gipps, 1990), be it inner-city school, or isolated island village school, may have important consequences for the nature of classroom assessments. It is considered therefore essential a brief description of the spatial context of a typical rural and urban Greek primary school setting.

9.1.1. Rural primary schools

As OECD (1982) reports, 59% of all Greek primary schools are staffed by one or two teachers. Enrolments are not exceed twenty. It is considered as an advantage of this situation that pupils can work in a secure familiar environment and learn from their peers, and that teachers can get to know intimately the strengths and weaknesses of each pupil. Further, the practice is for the same teacher to accompany the same class through three, four or even more years. Among the disadvantages is that the teacher is obliged to cover too wide a curriculum and to leave pupils in a given age group to their own devices for long period of time. In addition, there is the risk that might be pupils pay the consequences of the exposure to an incompetent teacher for their whole primary education. Young and inexperienced teachers are disproportionately represented in the rural schools, seniority carrying with it the opportunity to teach in an urban school. However, recently the state attempted to change the situation by closing small rural schools catering for less than fifteen pupils, and according to the geographical circumstances. Thus, greater school units with at least three teachers established at larger villages. The state pays the transportation cost for the pupils from the villages around to come at these schools.

Village schools observed were surrounded by gardens well preserved by the children, which were full of blooming roses and other flowers at the time of the data collection, and a fairly large playground.

The rural classrooms were fully decorated with wise sentences of ancient Greek philosophers, portraits of the heroes of the 1821 revolution against the Turks, the map of Greece, the Christ's icon and children's art and craft work. Since the teacher and the pupils share the same room for several years in one or two-teachers schools, the classroom decoration rarely changes as teachers said. Overall, these village schools have one or two classrooms and every teacher teaches 2-3 levels pupils of different ages in the same classroom. The classroom arrangement appears with rows of desks facing the teacher's desk, i.e. they were traditional classrooms. Six such schools were observed catering for about 30 pupils each and they were staffed by two or three teachers. A visitor encounters from the first minute a warm atmosphere from the school, the teachers and the pupils.

Schools in the island of Kythira operated only in the mornings from 8.30 to 2.30. It is interesting to note here the different quality of the relationships between pupils and teachers when comparing with those in the urban schools. Teachers at the villages know very well every child and its family, and there is a great respect of the pupils and their parents to the teacher.

9.1.2. Urban primary schools

Those primary schools observed located in a residential district of Athens catering for children from all classes. Most of these schools had similar characteristics. That is, 2-3 floor buildings, made of massive grey concrete and glass, surrounded by residential blocks and very few or not at all green. Generally, these are unattractive buildings having a relatively small playground.

A long corridor inside leads to the classrooms. In a wider space inside the entrance there were the school notice-boards on which were displayed information about the school's timetable, the parents visiting hours, the staff names and classrooms,

instructions in case of emergency, and some other information for forthcoming events. Beside was the headteacher and the deputy headteacher office and next was the staffroom.

In some schools there was a 'library', that is, some bookcases with mainly encyclopedia and children fiction books, often locked in the staffroom, from where children could borrow books usually for the weekends. Two stairs lead to the first and second floors. The average class size was 30 pupils per teacher. Assemblies usually take place outdoors in the playground, as well as the physical education and the school feasts when the weather permits it. In each school there is a canteen selling refreshments and sandwiches to the pupils. One or two teachers are on duty in the playground during the break. None of the observed schools had a science or art and craft laboratory/workshop.

The heads had administrative role rather than policy-making and at the time of this study they had no power over teachers with respect to their teaching commitments. The school adviser had the pedagogical responsibilities (chapter 6). Broadfoot et al. (1993) report similar head's status in French primary schools.

The teaching session was 45 minutes with a 10 minutes break in between. Since 1980 schools operate five days a week. Except for the teaching staff there are no other adults dealing with children within the school. Since 1987 in large schools remedial classes for children with difficulties in maths and in language were founded (Law, 1566, 1985).

9.1.3. Classroom arrangements

In general, classrooms operated quietly, though occasional shouts can be heard from outside. Pupils could not walk in the classroom or speak without teacher's permission (control). Almost all classrooms observed operated in the traditional

way having pupils' desks in rows facing teacher's desk which in many occasions was at a higher level than those of pupils' so that s/he could see all the children and control them. When teachers asked for reasoning such classroom arrangement, most of them argued that so they maintain class order and keep the instruction flow. As a teacher put it:

> When you have to manage overcrowded classrooms, you cannot put their desks in another way. So they can see the blackboard and the teacher can see all children. On the other hand, as you notice, here we do not work in groups. The instruction is mainly lecture style.

Only in two classes there were desks arranged for group work. In general, most of the classrooms were plain, poorly decorated with a map of Greece, the Christ's icon, and some pupils' work. At the front of the class beside the teacher was the fixed blackboard, the basic teaching tool in a Greek primary classroom, indicating a 'chack and talk' pedagogy. On the one side of the classroom there was a notice board where the pupils display their work and drawings. Individual pupils have their classroom base where they carry on the bulk of their activities.

The functional nature of the school architecture and the internal decoration is supplemented by teacher's use of space and resources to produce an appropriate learning milieu. It is worthy to note that in observed schools children's work was rarely displayed, except children's creative writing, and where it was there was little evident with mounting it carefully, attractively or in some sort of context. On the contrary, in several schools teacher-made displays covered large areas of wall space of the classroom. These were permanent reminders of what has being taught or were records of what in some earlier time were lists or diagrams presented on worksheets or on the blackboard. They are often pointed to during teaching as evidence of what teachers can expect children to know. Most of them are language or mathematics related material but not for other subjects. As a teacher explained: "Our dominant aim is the development of the basics, reading, writing

and mathematics for all pupils, and on those we place the onus." There were not any 3D artefacts or other stimulus displays to stimulate interest, involvement and enthusiasm in a particular subject.

The classroom environment of the observed schools could typically be characterised as a setting which communicates to pupils their status as passive learners of important socially valued knowledge (Nomikou, 1987; Starida, 1990). That is, they are obliged to learn externally imposed knowledge, which they do not choose, and assessment procedures gauge how far they digest it. Obviously this indicates an absolute control on children's learning and a traditional pedagogy.

The blackboard as the centre of the classroom attention for five hours daily and the walls decoration stress the scholastic content of classroom life. The teacher role is predominant in this context and symbolises the source of skills and knowledge. The pupils' task on the other hand, is continuous individual work in order to master knowledge and skills, which are obviously the subject of classroom assessment that this study explores.

Since all pupils face similar classroom environments this is another feature of the equality the system claims that provides to all children. Another profound feature of classrooms observed was that all their environment was scholasticly orientated, and it ignored the social and cultural life outside the school.

All teachers planned lessons separately for their class. There was not instances of team teaching. Nearly 97 per cent of the classes observed operated by permanent teachers, the supply ones accounted for about 3 per cent.

There has been no cross-curricular or thematic work observed. Teachers in most schools said that they often use the time of other lessons, such as history, art and

craft, to complete the lessons of Greek language or mathematics, since they consider the latter as the essential knowledge.

Since classes are considered as homogeneous groups teachers prepare the same tasks for all pupils (lack of differentiation). Children are expected to be silent in class, speaking after teacher's permission (another indication of teacher's control).

The typical teacher teaches didactically standing at the front of the class, lecturing and giving some kind of explanation. The main visual aid s/he uses is the blackboard. An interesting point was that such a didactic style extended to all subjects. The typical teaching style could be characterised as teacher-centered pedagogy. Even in areas where the children have to develop their creativity and imagination, such as art and craft or poem, they had to imitate either the teacher-made models or to learn by heart famous Greek poems. In rare situations teachers found to express public criticism on pupils learning effort.

9.2. In the field

Sitting to the side at the rear of the classroom, where he was able to see and hear all that went on, the researcher attempted to grasp as more, and as full as possible, the assessment events taken place. He also avoided entering into classroom activities and did not interact in any way with the teacher and pupils. Although, as it was planned the focus was on tests, textbook tasks, homework, essays, teacher's verbal comments, praise or criticism, written comments, grades, marking, and recording approaches that teachers use, from the first sessions it was felt that many other assessment activities were taking place in the classroom at a lightning speed and in various modes. The observer was bombarded by numerous evaluative interactions, such as those concerning the management of the class for keeping smooth the flow of instruction. From formal assessments such as written tests or embodied in textbooks tasks, to the many informal ones, such as the continuous questioning,

observations of performance, listening of pupils reading and many others, presented in subsequent sections of this chapter. Moreover, covert assessment interactions conceived such as the different tone of teacher's voice when posing a question, or responding to a pupil's initiative, and the assessments teachers make by scanning their children eyes to see if they had understood the taught material or not.

These overwhelming stimuli raised serious questions on the observer's mind: What was eventually more important to record and how? Teacher's questions, praise or criticism? The non-verbal assessments? Who was assessing whom? The teacher assessed pupils or pupils assessed the teacher? Were class reactions an assessment of teacher's teaching effectiveness, as well as, for pupils' learning effort and ability?

Teachers decided sometimes immediately, sometimes after a short or longer delay. Often assessments concerned behavioural grounds and sometimes the affective domain of pupil's personality. Soon it became difficult for the observer to keep track of all those assessment interchanges. This complexity and plethora of information accompanied classroom assessment resulted in the gradually accumulation of a vast bulk of notes in the researcher's notebooks after the first days of observations. As Woods (1986) notes, "a classroom is a miniature of the real life full of ambiguities, inconsistencies, general messiness and illogicalities".

Gradually, meanwhile, a progressive focusing on specific episodes started and regularities of assessment events appeared. This in turn came to act as the prime agency of selection in what to observe and what to record. Common assessment episodes occurred in every classroom, differing slightly among them. From these events, typical patterns of action emerged which constructed the framework of the assessment events categorisation.

After some time of observations, the researcher noticed that some teachers followed similar patterns of assessment related activities, whilst others applied opposite ones, and others applied inconsistent practices. Some teachers for instance, used always grades, whilst others used only descriptive comments on children's work. Such different patterns of assessments are called in this study 'assessment styles' and are examined in more detail in chapter 10.

An integral part of the verbal interaction between teacher and pupils are paralinguistic features such as: facial expressions, gestures, eye or head movements and so on (the assessment language). In turn, the meaning and significance of questions, answers and utterances, is often dependent upon these paralinguistic and contextual clues accompanying them (Pollard, 1985). Nevertheless, these aspects seem very difficult to be recorded by a systematic classroom observation schedule.

9.3. THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The researcher conceives classroom assessments as four phase interactions between the teacher and pupil(s). During the first phase the teacher collects information, evidence for what is subject to assessment. This is followed, in the second phase, by the interpretation of this evidence, in reference to some standards, during which the teacher compares the evidence to the standards and makes a positive, negative or neutral judgement. The third phase includes the teacher's responses or reactions based on the judgement. These are dressed in various forms, verbal or non verbal, comments positive, negative or neutral, symbols, grades, marks and the like. The final phase concerns the various effects that teacher's responses have on children, and includes children's reactions. During this phase the teacher often makes further decisions and takes measures for the sake of improvements. In the classroom settings, sometimes the teacher's decision is not announced to the pupil(s), but is kept in the teacher's head, or even the whole assessment process is so covert that is impossible for an observer to grasp it.

The term '*assessment episode*' is used in this study to represent a complete sequence of such classroom assessment procedures. The concept of the assessment episode is also used as an 'analytical tool' to describe and explain observational data.

It is necessary to note that within each episode various assessment elements appear regarding for instance, a way to gather evidence, questioning, marking and grading etc. Since assessment and instruction are inseparable such assessment components are interwoven and mutually interactive.

Observational data have been summarised, and are described under the main questions exploring the concept of classroom assessment: why, how and what. Data related to each of these questions are analysed and presented under the relevant subthemes.

9.4. PURPOSES OF CLASSROOM ASSESSMENTS

Classroom assessment is the process of collecting, interpreting and synthesizing information for decision making (Airasian, 1991). It is interesting to see which purposes observed teachers attempted to fulfil when assessing.

They appeared to assess pupils' academic progress, or their psychological and social characteristics. Teachers were also monitoring their teaching, children's behaviour and attempted to diagnose pupils' emotional, learning or social problems. The ways to gather assessment evidence seemed to depend each time on the purpose the teacher was intending to accomplish (Frith and Macintosh, 1984; Satterly, 1989; Airasian 1991). This section examines the intellectual, psychological, social or managerial dimensions of classroom assessment.

9.4.1. INTELLECTUAL PURPOSES

Assessment information to assist learning seemed to be the primary broad intention of all teachers: that is, to develop the necessary prerequisites and intervene where it was needed in order to help the children acquire the knowledge and skills prescribed by the curriculum. However, since this is not a simple operation it seemed to come into being in different ways, some rapid, some long term, and to be determined by various interrelated factors and actions.

Firstly, it must be noted that almost all the assessment activities observed in classrooms were of a *formative* nature. An additional reason for this is that up to the time of the study formal summative assessments had been abolished (chapter 6). Instead, teachers were obliged to submit an aggregate grade for each subject for every pupil each term to the head teacher, to update the school's records regarding individual children's progress. The latter was the only kind of summative assessment.

9.4.1.1. Diagnostic Assessment

Assessments intended to diagnose children's learning level, and emotional or social problems appeared to be the most common. Teachers very often attempted to identify such children's difficulties by observing either their performance and behaviour, or their work.

Regarding academic progress all teachers observed constantly assessed them to see what children have learned and whether they had any gaps and misunderstandings. In order to attain this teachers constantly questioned the children, observed their performance, checked their work, and assigned various tasks in an attempt to measure whether and up to what extent they had learned the material.

A routine assessing activity typical at the beginning of each teaching session was the 'examination' of the previous lesson. The teacher attempted to link it with the new

and to use it as a foundation for the new knowledge. Further, a necessary precondition was to assess children's present level of knowledge as far as the previous taught material was concerned. Teachers attempted in this way to diagnose whether their pupils had any gaps in their mastery of the previous material and the skills needed; whether they were able to accept the new and whether they needed any additional explanations or help, to make a success of the new topic. In other words, the whole process was a check for comprehension and diagnostic assessment. The following is a useful example of teacher 3, (T3), practice, while examining her pupils in the six-times table taught in the previous lesson. (in parentheses are observer's comments):

T3: (to the class):	Could you please tell me what is two times six? (she scanned raised hands, and points with a glance at a girl, Sofia).
Sofia:	Twelve Mrs.
T3:	Well done! Sofia.
T3:	Five times six? (Now fewer hands rised, and after waiting for a short time she turns towards Dimos).
Dimos:	Twenty five
T3:	Another one? (she nods to Manolis).
Manolis:	Twenty eight (said Manolis after a pause)
T3:	It is thirty
Maria:	I knew it (shouts Maria, from the left corner desk).
T3:	How much is six times seven? (Only two hands at the end of the classroom raised at once. T3 waits for a few moments and then she nods to Maria).
Maria:	Forty two
T3:	Right, well done, (she responds, and adds)
T3:	I was ready today to start you off on seven times, but because I see that most of you haven't learned the six times, we'll probably stay here and repeat it.

Thus the teacher diagnosed her pupils' competence in the previous teaching unit of the six-times table, before they move on to number seven. Furthermore, she used this diagnostic information and decided to repeat the previous lesson instead of proceeding. Some teachers said that at the beginning of the school year they usually make such diagnostic assessments by teacher-made tests or by oral questioning, and added that they need such information, particularly if they take on new children.

Teachers also were found typically to gather diagnostic information of a 'physical' nature and make the appropriate decisions, as for example, teacher 4, who shifted a girl from a rear row to a front seat once she had noted that the particular child could not see the blackboard clearly. This in turn led the teacher to refer the child's difficulty first to her parents and then to the eye specialist who finally suggested glasses. After that, as the teacher said, her writing improved as did her other achievements. Other teachers said that they had diagnosed individual children's pace of writing, hearing problems and the like, and then they attempted to help treat those children accordingly.

Teacher 5 applied diagnostic assessment when he observed a boy who was too shy to participate in class discussion and who avoided playing with the others in the playground. During P.E. the teacher placed the boy into a team, aiming to help him towards socialization. Teacher 7 also mentioned that frequent disruptive behaviour or inattentiveness was a sign for him to look carefully for the reason, and then to apply the appropriate remedy. In other words, such teachers referred to emotional problems which they often diagnosed in classes that, according to the teachers, seriously influence children's intellectual progress. Another domain for which teachers appeared to gather diagnostic information included the more social aspects of children's behaviour. In one class a lot of children were shouting to answer a question. The teacher used the situation as a diagnostic cue that these

children needed to learn how to discuss in the classroom's social setting. Thus, he organised a remedial session to teach them to speak one on a time.

Another purpose for which such information was used, was its function of diagnosing weaknesses of teaching effectiveness. Teacher 3 for example, saw very few raised hands when examining the six-time table. This was a diagnostic alarm and feedback, for her that something had gone wrong with her teaching, and she reacted appropriately. She diagnosed and predicted her children's future needs:

> By examining them in the six-times table, and finding that the vast majority had serious deficiencies, I've predicted that if we proceed to the number seven the problems simply will recur and become worse, that's why I immediately decided to repeat it. (T3)

9.4.1.2. Feedback to the pupil

As teachers said, classroom assessment helped children to realise what they had learned, when they got feedback. Pupils did seem to get this from their teacher's verbal or non-verbal reactions to their work, performance, or behaviour. As children said, they wanted to know how their teacher responded to their contribution to a class discussion, or their creative writing, and their attitudes during the lesson. As teacher 12 put it:

> I feel that they constantly want to see my reactions to what they said, to what they've produced and even to their behaviour in class. Particularly when they've completed the exercises or tasks I've assigned to them they're really keen to know the results. (T12)

A pupil underlined this need:

> Yes, we want to know as soon as possible whether the teacher has understood what we meant, if it was correct or irrelevant, so can change it next time. Teacher's comments, marks or grades, are the payment for the effort we've spent on the task.

Children receive even non-verbal teacher feedback:

> We can all understand and we take notice of the teacher's smiles or frowns and the way he works in general.

Teacher 1 described and justified a way to provide feedback to the pupils:

> I try always to correct pupils' work together with the child. I help them to understand their mistakes, explain where need to pay more attention in future and ask them to correct it themselves. This way helps pupils to evaluate their own work, they get feedback and appreciate their teacher as somebody who is really interested in their work. (T1)

However, in several classes teachers did not provide adequate feedback to their pupils, other than brief comments. Others provided short comments accompanied with a mark or grade.

9.4.1.3. Assessment for remediation

Many teachers said that classroom assessment information considerably assisted them in taking the appropriate remedial measures for the class as a whole or for the individual child. Moreover, such information was used in particular for the transfer of less-able children to remedial classes (chapter 6). Homework often provided opportunities for pupils to practise the material they had not mastered. Collaborative assessment, an approach only rarely observed, was claimed to be the best form of remediation.

9.4.1.4. Feedback to the teacher

Feedback to the teacher was found to be one of the basic purposes of classroom assessment which however seemed most of the time was taking place without the teacher's conscious awareness. Observational findings indicated, though not explicitly, that in fact teachers typically were evaluating their own instruction and modifying it continuously according to the reactions, hints and signals they received from the children.

In all classes pupils' raised hands, or the 'light in their eyes' in response to questions about something they had taught, signal to the teacher how well the instruction has gone. Recall teacher 3 for instance, who altered her teaching plans

when she divined that children had serious gaps in the six-times table. Another teacher rephrased a couple of textbook tasks for a few weak students during maths, so they understood what the exercises were for. Teachers in general, found to take measures such as, rephrasing, repeating, remediation and the like to improve their teaching effectiveness. In addition, teachers said that they used previous assessments during the planning of their teaching and along with the material and resources they have prepared.

Assessment results provided information regarding the appropriateness of the teaching approach. Useful assessment information for a particular class or an individual pupil was transmitted from the previous teachers to their successors as well. Teachers also gained constant feedback from the children by observing their reactions, their body language, as well as what they said. As teacher 19 put it:

> We ask them perhaps as a matter of habit, if they understand, but regardless of their answer we know if they really have followed, by 'reading their eyes'. Whenever you see blank eyes, something's gone wrong and you have to react immediately, either by stopping and repeating what you've taught, or by shifting the activity to attract their attention and interest again. Anyway you have to stop and find out the reason for their misunderstanding. (T19)

From the above extract the informal way by which, perhaps unconsciously, teachers assessed their own teaching effectiveness becomes evident, as well as the need to make decisions in order to maintain pupils' interest. Children's body language therefore, seemed to be more significant for teachers than the answers children themselves articulated. This example also indicates a typical non-verbal instinctive way of assessment (Shipman, 1983; Child, 1986).

9.4.1.5. Assessment for planning instruction

Closely associated with the above purposes was teachers' use of assessment results to plan their instruction, ordinary or remedial. Their comments illustrate the issue:

> Of course, I bear in mind how my children respond in the exercise or the test I gave, and I teach accordingly. (T17)

> Since I know my pupils' weaknesses I can design appropriate tasks, and methods for the next lesson. (T7)
>
> I always adapt the material according to the needs of these children and their interests, because these textbooks have been written with an urban child of average ability in mind. (T11)

It is interesting however first, that by and large teachers kept mental records of the results of their assessments which they used as a basis to plan their next steps. Second, very few of them found to construct different difficulty tasks suitable to the different ability groups of their class. Typically, teachers did not plan in written their assessment activities.

So far the observational data dealt by and large with the intellectual area of children's progress. The following two sections look at the way classroom assessment impacts on children psychologically and socially.

9.4.2. PSYCHOLOGICAL AIMS

Much of classroom assessment seemed to serve affective purposes. Teachers seemed to consider several of these features when teaching. The following views might be used as examples of the ways teachers conceived and treated such affective pupils' qualities:

> I've noticed that when a pupil starts a subject with a willing approach, he seems to learn more easily than his peer who begins with anxiety or is not interested in the subject. (T8)

Another teacher interpreted certain cues in children's behaviour as reflecting their positive or negative interests:

> When I see bored looks that means lack of interest in the subject. Eagerly raised hands and smiling pupils' faces, on the contrary, convey a message of enthusiasm and confidence. I'm constantly alert to catch such signals and to modify my teaching accordingly. (T10)

The majority of teachers appeared to try to help pupils and especially the less able ones to build up their self-concept, by encouraging their effort, praising their achievements and performance, and providing rewards to them in the form of positive oral or written comments. Others drew stars or smiling faces under children's work, or gave them some other kind of 'concrete' rewards. The typical teachers' view regarding the psychological purposes of assessments was expressed through the following comments:

> In the final analysis, the school's aim is to encourage children to learn, and to develop a positive attitude towards schooling. Yet, how will this happen if we don't assist children to enhance their self-confidence and self-esteem. (T1)

> For the poor learners, in particular, we musn't expect high attainments; all we can do is to encourage their effort. School has to help them build up their self-concept, not to destroy it by demanding higher outcomes of their abilities, which results in a constant sense of failure for them. (T20)

> We have to give them tasks suitable for their capabilities, so that they will master at least some, and we must reward them, so that they'll get intrinsic motivation and develop a willingness to keep trying. (T15)

A crucial covert goal all teachers constantly seemed to strive to fulfil was their effort to motivate children for learning. Typical teachers' views were like the following:

> Since some of the subjects are not interesting for them we have to encourage the readiness to try. We use various ways and stimuli for that and sometimes we succeed. I also think that children's effort are more important than their products. (T17)

Others mentioned the intrinsic motivation they wished to foster in children:

> I attempt to help them understand that the most important thing is a feeling of competence which they can acquire bit by bit when they work on a task to master it. They really feel more confident when they finally reach the level of mastery which the task requires. That is, they are continuously motivated during such a process. When I announce to the class that Makis, for example, completed his task successfully the motivation the pupil gains is great. (T16)

Teachers often attempted also to enhance pupils' motivation in a subject matter or a specific teaching unit aiming to increase academic progress. Numerous such instances closely associated with evaluation of children's work were observed. By providing positive feedback teachers attempted to motivate pupils either to try harder for higher achievements next time, or at least to maintain an adequate competency. Commenting on the issue a teacher said:

> I think that we all bear in mind the need to motivate our pupils for learning by praising their performance, their effort and willingness. I've forgotten what the literature said about these things, but my experience guides me to respond in a way that increases the children's willingness to work harder and take part in activities. (T20)

Teachers who in an attempt to be 'objective' assigned only marks or grades to the children according to the actual value of their work seemed to disappoint the weak children who tend to experience constant failure.

Some teachers stressed also the negative and harmful effects of anxiety and fear, which too frequent assessment may have. Less-able pupils in particular, have a paramount need of confidence-building. In one case a teacher said: "I don't believe that assessment is necessary at all". Two thirds of the teachers mention that systematic assessment creates competitive trends in class and hence it may destroy good social cohesion among children. Others noted that marks are meaningless for the children, that they discriminate between individuals in class and may result in their being labelled.

Two young teachers stated at the beginning of the observation that they do not assess their pupils but simply assign a mark or a grade because they are obliged to for the school's records. However, during instruction they were found to be constantly assessing the children (Pollard et al., 1994) verbally and non-verbally. When at the end of the session they were asked by the observer to explain their

evaluative practices they finally admitted that they assess all the time as a matter of course.

This raises the very important question of how teachers can become aware of such tacit assessments, in order to use them more effectively to promote learning. Overall, these different views of various groups of teachers reveal the different 'assessment styles' (chapter 10).

It is interesting to note the views of two children, who according to their teacher belonged to the group of 'middle' ability, regarding their embarrassment when assessment is used as a basis for comparisons (This example falls into the last phase of the assessment episode process, i.e. 'implications'):

> I want to get teachers' marks in writing on my work instead of the whole class getting to know my results, 'cause if I get low marks the others will think I'm stupid.
>
> I believe that my work is personal belonging only to me and I don't want everybody to see my marks.

These children's views reveal the significance of the effects teachers' responses have on children. Hence, teachers have to respond very carefully after assessing to avoid undesirable side effects.

9.4.3. SOCIAL AIMS

The aim to socialize children at school was included among the basic general principles of the Law (1566, 1985). Since children are in a social group such as the class, it is obvious that they are routinely in a constant natural process of socialisation. From the first days of schooling they start to shape a social personality and incorporate a special role when interacting with peers and the teacher. The teachers' role at this point becomes very important as well, since they

have to teach these children the approved ways of living in a new social environment with others, to encourage them in expressing their view confidently and so on. As teacher 7 said:

> Children have to learn how to show good manners towards adults, towards each other and to respect their property, how to speak one at a time, and so on, so that they will adapt to the school and bit by bit will be prepared for the world outside school. (T7)

Encouraging children to discuss in class, for instance, how they spent their weekend and getting them to use their experience for creative writing, or to have such things used by the teacher form problems or stories, as teachers argued, also fulfilled social purposes of assessment:

> We want to show them that school is not a closed institution, but an open organization interested in the outside world as well. (T16)

Teacher 17 took the commonplace view:

> We live in a society which day by day is getting worse. Humanitarian values progressively disappear and people become more and more individualistic. We do not trust each other any more, we see every day on the media the corruption of our society. That's why for me it is important to foster in my pupils values such as trust, honesty, courtesy, and the like hoping that if we develop in them such principles they may build a better society than the present. (T17)

Subjects such as study of the environment, religious studies, history or geography, and hence the constant assessments of their mastery of content, aimed directly at fostering social and academic qualities in pupils. Teachers also, by using assessment information regarding emotional characteristics such as isolation or leadership, placed children in appropriately composed groups, for instance in P.E., so that the children could get some social benefits by cooperating with others. An experienced teacher in a rural school used to encourage children to exchange their exercise books and correct each others mistakes because:

> This is a way to socialise the children, to make them feel accountable to their fellows peers, to respect each other and to be prepared for real life. (T14)

Another dimension of the social purposes of assessment emerged from the views of more than half of the teachers who claimed that when they assess pupils they bear in mind their socioeconomical background and living conditions (Mavrogiorgos, 1988; Airasian, 1991; Pollard et al., 1994). Thus, they maintained an attitude of compensation in particular towards children from deprived families (Sharp and Green, 1975).

> We know that 'equal opportunities' for learning don't exist; it often is a matter of the parents economic situation and the help they give. We sometimes are more lenient towards pupils coming from poor families and more demanding towards pupils coming from higher social classes (T11).

Others referred to the classroom social world:

> By observing the children every day, seeing how they cooperate with each other or with the teacher, and participate in classroom discussions, the teacher can intervene and help them to build up a social personality and to adapt themselves to the community they live in (T19).

Another teacher said:

> When we praise their good manners at school and in the world outside, and when we criticise undesirable behaviour, our assessments aim to serve social purposes as well (T10).

Another issue regarding the actual social purposes of assessment has to do with the trend advocated in the official statements to assess children against a criterion, test, textbook tasks, or teacher made ones, rather than to assess by comparing one child with another. In ten classrooms, however, there seemed to be a tendency to use assessment to compare individuals, to reward higher achievements, and to criticise low ones.

9.4.3.1. Reporting assessment results

Nearly all teachers expressed the view that one of the major purposes of their assessments was to communicate information to parents. It was the case, though, that grades, marks or brief teacher comments had not much meaning for them and they asked for more specific information about their children's progress. Parents

have, in fact, resisted vigorously the abolition of formal assessments, marks and grades and the regular progress report which up to 1980 children had got at the end of each term (chapter 6).

As a teacher said such a communication was easier when using marks or grades:

> ...so that parents get an idea of their children's progress or deterioration, and if they wish they can help them, in cooperation of course with the classroom teacher. However it is the parents of the 'more able' pupils and not of those who have greater needs, who visit the school frequently and ask for cooperation (T2)

9.4.4. MANAGERIAL PURPOSES

9.4.4.1. Control

It seemed that individual teachers were in sole control in their classroom. They exerted their power and authority over pupils' learning, knowledge, speech, and behaviour. All the classroom activities were teacher-centred. Only after teachers' permission children shifted activities, moved in the classroom, took the speech. Teachers, often without been aware, and regardless how effectively, continuously attempted to control children's learning and attitudes. They were the sole authority to determine what children had to learn and to decide when to start a new activity. They were the only source of knowledge, and constantly corrected children's verbal and written speech by rephrasing, repeating, rejecting children's answers, etc. (Makrinioti, 1982; Nomikou, 1987; Papastamatis, 1988; Starida, 1990).

Since classrooms are complex social environments where children interact with one another and with the teacher in various ways, cooperation, order, and discipline seemed to be essential prerequisites for a smooth flow of instruction (Broadfoot, 1982; Airasian, 1991). Learning and maintaining classroom order are interdependent enterprises. Many of the observed teacher's decisions therefore, were concerned with the establishment and maintenance of classroom social

stability. When teacher 15, for example, separated Manolis from Kostas because they were talking all the time, she made a decision concerning her classroom order and stability. Stelio's rudeness to the cleaner one morning required sending him to the head.

Nearly all the teachers indicated that if a teacher is not able to maintain classroom control s/he is a threat to the school operation. These quotations illustrate teachers' feelings:

> My teaching success is often appraised by my colleagues, parents and the children, from the beginning of the school year because I manage to keep the children under control. (T18)

> You can't teach thirty or so children if they don't listen to you with their mouth closed. Then you have to maintain their interest and attention, as well as class discipline if you wish to finish a session (T7).

> Children by nature are quick to move, to speak, to laugh. If you once let them get out of hand you've lost them. You must always be alert to keep them under control (T13).

The first comment reveals how accountable teachers felt towards their colleagues. The second shows the teacher's concern with keeping the teaching flowing smoothly for academic purposes, and underlines the classroom constraints, here class size. The third extract reveals the teacher's anxiety to keep the children under control, hence a concern for 'coping strategies' (Pollard, 1985).

Two female teachers and two young supply teachers appeared to be the ones who complained more often about lack of discipline in their classes. In such classes the teacher's shouting and 'overcontrol' activities were common which however, resulted in only short term effectiveness, as the head teachers of those schools said. Moreover, in such classes it seemed to result in a serious shortage of teaching time since attempts to impose discipline took over. Three teachers mentioned that they

needed to punish some pupils (Papastamatis, 1988) to be sure of establishing a smoothly working class.

Every school has its unique authority system, and each classroom has a private system of control. Teachers vary widely in their definition of the acceptable behaviour they lay down in their classes, and in their ability to impose it, (Delamont, 1976). The following view is interesting:

> Pupils have to learn from their time at school to respect rules and authorities. How will they coexist with other people in future, if now they don't respect their peers, their teacher, their school, or their parents at home. One of the main aims of schooling is to prepare children for their future and to socialize them. (T7)

This teacher therefore sees the child as a potential adult (Berlak and Berlak, 1981), and the school as a preparation phase for future life. It is also quite clear that he believed strongly in the school's social function. As teachers said they explain to the children from the first days the rules of the school and the classroom. In some classrooms these rules were permanently displayed in big bold letters so that the teacher could often show them and remind the children of them (Makrinioti, 1982; Starida, 1990).

The sanctions which followed assessments relating to pupils' misbehaviour varied from a rigid frowning, exclusion from the classroom, or reporting to the headteacher, up to calling the child's parents. Such managerial assessments were routine phenomena in every classroom and the teacher had to act immediately to carry out effective teaching and to attain the teaching objectives on time. Most of these assessments took place automatically, and often teachers reacted intuitively without being consciously aware, as they explained, that they were assessing, since their main interest was focused in the process of teaching.

Two teachers at the sixth age-level of a big urban school complained that they face difficulties in imposing discipline on some children because (Papastamatis, 1988) they have been used to a different sort of 'pedagogy' at home:

> These children from their early age have been brought up under authoritarian patterns of socialization, and expect teachers to use similar practices. If we use democratic patterns such children may interpret it as a weakness (T2).

9.4.5 PSYCHOMOTOR AIMS

As mentioned in the previous section, some schooling objectives are of a psychomotor nature. In the lower levels in particular, teachers often assisted children to improve their skills such as holding properly their pencil, drawing properly letters, following the movements of the teacher in P.E. or dancing and the like. Three teachers of higher levels supported children to develop investigating skills, i.e. how and where to look for relevant information, how to interpret summarise and report it.

9.4.6. Overview

This section reported observational data which first, described the spatial context of typical rural and urban Greek primary schools. A reference to the dilemmas the investigator faced at the begining of the classroom observations, due to the plethora of the interactions and the complexity of the classroom assessment process followed. Then an 'assessment episode' was analysed as a unit of a complete assessment process, which is used as an analytic framework for this thesis. It was explained the way the investigator conceives the assessment process, that it is developed in the four phases: evidence collection, interpretation, teacher's response, and consideration of the implications on children's learning.

Further sections examined the main purposes that teachers were attempting to fulfil when assessing. Five wider categories of purposes were identified, i.e. intellectual,

psychological, social, managerial, and psychomotor. The prime teachers concern seemed to be the use of assessment in order to promote learning, and to socialize the children. They focussed on the fostering of the basics and encouraged children's learning motivation. Classroom observations revealed as well the wide use of assessment for diagnosis of children's learning difficulties and to provide feedback to the child and to the teachers, on which they based their instructional plans.

Among the main psychological aims assessment was to fulfil the fostering of children's learning motivation and interest were among the chief teachers' concerns.

However, overall, the main covert teachers' aim was to control children's learning and classroom behaviour. This is not surprising given the social features of the Greek culture, the long Greek traditional pedagogy (chapter 6) and the pragmatic classroom constraints. Another interesting finding was that some teachers were not clearly aware that what they were doing was assessment.

All these have various implications on teaching and learning. It has to be mentioned that in theory, Greek teachers had to implement a child-centred 'progressive' pedagogy (chapter 6), but the majority of them had not received relevant training. For years they used to teach within a traditional context and pedagogy. The implications then from teachers attempt to match a 'progressive' pedagogy to a traditional framework resulted in teacher difficulty in implementing the new reforms, prevented the development of children's creativity and their training in discovery learning, and made them passive learners.

The next section reports how observed teachers implemented classroom assessment.

9.5. HOW CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT WAS CONDUCTED

Introduction

A description of observed assessment episodes follows in the light of the four phases of the assessment process, i.e. evidence collection, interpretation, teacher response and impacts on pupils. Often these descriptions are complemented with first, teachers views, explaining their actions, and second with children's reactions, views. The latter are considered as indicators of the short and long term effects assessments may have on children. However, it has to be noted that within many episodes it was not easy to clearly distinguish the four phases of the assessment process because it was carried out in a lightning speed and its stages overlap.

9.5.1. 1st Phase: Evidence Collection

Teachers applied many practices to collect evidence depending on the subject, the particular classroom circumstances and the purposes they wanted to fulfil, (Satterly, 1989; Airasian, 1991). This section reports a great variety of practices for gathering information. The content of the evidence for assessments is presented in a subsequent section.

9.5.1.1. Observations

Observation was the most commonly used way for teachers to collect information about children's academic, behavioural and social characteristics. In all classrooms teachers listened to children read, ask questions, give explanations and make statements. Teachers also kept an eye on children's written or other work as well as on their behaviour and interactions with the teacher and their peers. Nevertheless, it was very rarely that teachers mentioned observation among their approaches for collecting assessment evidence. This is similar to the questionnaire findings where only 12% of the respondents mentioned observation (chapter 8).

9.5.1.2. Oral Questions

This was the most common overt approach used to gather information. Most of the cognitive assessments were made through low-level questions, i.e. those recalling facts, rules, simple principles and dates. In addition, teachers used dozens of questions dealing with non-cognitive issues, to manage and to impose their authority in class and to maintain order. They also used questions of 'social' nature asking, for instance, for children's activities outside the school. Oral questions was the modal assessment approach according to the questionnaire data, as well.

The content of the questions and targets shifted as the lesson progressed. Questions at the beginning of the instruction mainly aimed to link the previous lesson with the new. During instruction teachers asked questions mainly to check whether children were following and understanding. At the end of the lesson questions were used to review, to seek for understanding and to transfer the new knowledge to different circumstances for problem solving and implementation of rules, i.e. to check whether the pupils have attained the new lesson's objectives. The following example of a history lesson on Alexander's the Great expedition to India, is illustrative of such sequence of different questions (observer's comments are in parentheses):

Teacher 10: What was our last lesson on history about (Link with previous)

Teacher 10: Who could tell me the main actors of the story so far? (Checking for pupils' attendance and following)

Teacher 10: Who would summarise the main points of today's lesson? (Reviewing)

Teacher 10: If nowadays Alexander the Great was to invade India, what sort of forces he might needed, and how long it would take him, in comparison with what we've learned today? (Transformation of knowledge and problem solving).

The vast majority of questions used were of a 'closed' form, seeking for the one answer which teachers had in their head. Teachers used questions mainly to fulfil the first phase of the assessment process, namely, to collect evidence, and also to monitor pupils' performance.

The effects of teachers' academic questions on children (4th phase of assessment episodes), took two forms. First, there were those children who were in favour seeking for teachers' questions, usually 'higher ability' pupils, who considered it both motivating and a way to show off. Their opinions were similar to the following:

> I like the teacher to ask me often, I'm quick in answering, and that way I can show 'em what I know, and when I ask the teacher I cover up what I don't know.

However, there were also found children, usually the 'less able', who attempted to avoid teacher's questions. One of them explained why:

> ...'cause I'm not sure about my answer, and I'm scared of getting laughed at when I'm wrong. I'd rather keep quiet and not get asked.

9.5.1.3. Planning Assessment

Only three teachers (T2, T7, T13), were found to have prepared on a regular basis the necessary assessment graded tasks for children of different abilities. These tasks included true-false, multiple choice, spelling, and fill-in teacher-made tests for language, and exercises for maths. The vast majority of teachers did not plan their assessments. They tended to assess on the spot. However, more than half of the questionnaire respondents indicated that they plan their assessments rather often (figure 1). This is an example of the way questionnaire findings can mislead and

therefore, how necessary is the 'triangulation' (Delamont, 1976; Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Wiersma, 1986) evidence collection from other sources and methods.

9.5.1.4. Textbook tasks

This category includes written assessments such as tests, exercises, and other tasks embodied in pupils' textbooks. These tasks were the same for all the class and for the same age-level countrywide. Children liked these tasks:

> It's a fun to work on these tasks, we like the drawings and the colours of the page, and we can show what we've learnt.

However, there was no provision for pupils with different abilities. This seemed to have implications on some pupils like the following:

> ...but, for me most of these are very difficult, I often don't get them all finished.

Several teachers said that they were flexible towards less able children and they allowed them to complete as many tasks as they could. Except for these daily textbook tasks, on completion of a course of teaching units there came a termly revision test, published by the Ministry of Education, to gauge the extent to which pupils had mastered the material taught so far. This was a kind of summative assessment. Written assessment in the shape of formal examinations had been abolished (chapter 6). In the questionnaire data written assessments as an approach of evidence collection took second place.

9.5.1.5. Teacher-made tests

Another very common overt activity observed in all classrooms, were tasks often written by the teacher on the blackboard which the children copied in their notebooks (Makrinioti, 1982), the 'chalk and talk' pedagogy. The commonly used tests were multiple choice, true-false, and filling in blanks. Three teachers (T2, T7, T13) were found to regularly prepare their own tasks graded in difficulty for

different ability groups. More than half of the teachers quite regularly (once or twice weekly), constructed simple exercises, worksheets and similar material. This indicated by 76% of the questionnaire sample. Typically, observed teachers indicated that they rely on their own-tests and other techniques rather than those imposed from others, to assess their children (Dor-Bremme, 1983). The explanation of Teacher 10 is typical:

> I prefer to use my own tests because I adapt them to my class needs, the wording they understand, according to the material I've taught, the particular purpose each time I'm looking for.

The need to adapt the tests in the individual class circumstances on the one hand and the teacher autonomy on the other seemed to be among the reasons why teachers tend to rely on their own tests.

9.5.1.6. Homework

Seventeen teachers out of twenty were found to give homework on a regular basis. The usual homework, in language for instance, was to copy a passage of the text, or to solve exercises or problems in maths. None of the reviewed children's homework books included any kind of exploratory tasks. About once a fortnight a language textbook task was to write a creative essay on a topic relevant to that day's reading. Most teachers asked children to write this as homework. Two teachers at rural schools made pupils keep a workbook for every subject.

Although according to the directives (Law 1566, 1985), homework had to be minimized or even abolished, it was found that the vast majority of teachers used it very regularly. This is in line with questionnaire findings (89%).

Two important issues emerge here. First, the degree of agreement between policy and practice; and second, the degree of control that a centralised education system like the Greek has to impose its policies. Teachers had such views:

> In theory, we cannot deviate from the official guide-lines. For instance, it is forbidden to assign any extra homework to the children. We are under the authority of the school adviser in this respect. However, most of us do give out homework regularly. (T19)

> Homework is essential for practice of the taught material as well as to consolidate learning. Pupils work at home in comfort and quiet, in their own surroundings and at their own pace. Moreover, somebody will always be available to help them when they run into difficulties. (T7)

Teachers also argued that parents demand regular homework for their children. Homework, and classwork are on the one hand, parts of the third phase of the assessment process, (teacher's response, and measures for improvement deriving from previous evaluation), catering for practice, or remedial activities, to fill gaps and apply the main points of a lesson; and on the other hand, parts of the first phase (evidence collection, for a following assessment episode), since they are in fact evidence of how well the children have attained the previous lesson's objectives.

Tasks given as homework appeared on a major means for assessment. This was another area where children expected to get feedback through teachers' written comments. It is interesting that after reviewing children's notebooks the investigator found that about 40% of the teachers did not check pupils' written work regularly. Teachers justified this negligence:

> When you have 35 children in a class and only 45 minutes for the lesson, you can easily understand the impossibility of doing everything. (T16)

> I give homework although sometimes I don't check it because I want them to practise every day. They don't know whether I'm going to correct it or not so they have to be on their toes all the time. (T13)

But, pupils complained:

> We want our work to be checked every day, otherwise how will we know if it was correct or not.
>
> If teachers don't look at our work, why have we to spend our time working on it?

9.5.1.7. Collaborative Assessment

A typical assessment activity observed in all classes was the correction of pupils' homework or classwork. According to the guide-lines this activity is carried out by the teacher going to individual pupils at their desks while they work on a given task, and by explaining to them their mistakes sotto voce. Meanwhile the others work on a task silently. However, in ten classes the children made a queue in front of the teacher's desk waiting for corrections, or a pupil brought all the workbooks to the teachers' desk to be corrected. The correction was done by and large, in the child's absence. In six cases teachers called up children to discuss and correct their mistakes together (different assessment styles followed in this respect as well). Most of the children were in favour of this co-operative kind of assessment:

> Well, correction with the teacher shows I count more. When we speak face to face it encourages me.
>
> The teacher explains what I've got wrong and how to get them right. I prefer that way, rather than getting my work back with comments written on it.

9.5.1.8. What Evidence?

The assessment evidence by and large consisted of children's written work, i.e homework, worksheets, classwork, their answers on textbook tasks, revision papers after the completion of longer units of learning, drawings, maps, and art and craft work. Moreover, information of their performance in class, both on academic and non-academic attainments, their attitudes and relationships with the others, and their

general behaviour. Teachers' considered samples of such huge amount of information to formulate specific, regarding a given task or lesson, or general decisions for class or individuals.

9.5.1.9. Pupils as assessors

In three urban classes and in most of the rural schools pupils exchanged workbooks and corrected each other's mistakes. Another version of peer assessment was the commonly observed performance of pupils, when either presenting their work in front of the class for the others to comment on, or displaying their work on the class-notice board for several days for other children to read. Such peer assessments seemed to be a natural and spontaneous exchange within many classes, but children usually expressed some criticism of their classmates' performance or behaviour. It is interesting to note the view of this boy, according to his teacher, one of a 'low ability':

> I'm afraid to read my writing in front of the class 'cause they laugh at me, they know that I can't write good stories.

But, a 'higher ability' girl said:

> I'm proud to read my work to the class, I need to show the others how well I can write. I have never had any criticism from them or from teachers. I feel very happy after this and I enjoy seeing my work displayed at the top of the class notice board.

The above children's comments reveal the serious implications assessments have on them. Such reactions belong in the last phase of the assessment process.

In many classes there was a tendency for children to assess their teacher's errors, unfair decisions, actions, and practices. In one classroom for instance, the teacher told the children that they have to get the speech by raising their hand. But, after this, when the children raised their hands to answer a question, they strongly

criticised their teacher because he asked a boy who had not raised his hand: "This is not fair Sir!", they shouted.

9.5.2. 2nd Phase: Evidence Interpretation

During the second phase of their assessments teachers interpreted the information they had collected, with reference mainly to three general standards (chapter 3). Namely, either, how well they had attained the objectives of a given teaching unit, the so called 'criterion referenced' assessment; or with reference to the other children's performance, i.e. 'norm referenced' assessment; or with reference to a child's own past performance, i.e. 'ipsative assessment'. Description of such assessments observed follows.

9.5.2.1. Criterion Referenced Assessments

Textbook tasks, teacher-made tests, revision papers and similar devices were often used in classes as academic criteria against which children had to work. Although it seemed that children were assessed against national standards of prescribed objectives, there appeared to be a lack of specific written reference criteria of acceptable levels of mastery. Teachers underlined this lack by saying:

> I appreciate that I have not a clear idea of the criteria according to which I've assessed this piece of work. But, deep in my mind I know that this one is a 'good' and that one is 'poor'.(T16)

> All teachers apply some criteria, although they might not be able to spell them out immediately. We constantly change our criteria according to the circumstances, the individual pupil, the subject matter and so on. We do not stick with one set of standards in the primary school. (T9)

> We often apply a 'general measure' rather vague and very flexible, which derives from the combination of a variety of parameters. (T18)

Often however, the criteria were of a no-cognitive nature, regarding for instance children's acceptable behaviour.

In three cases teachers were rather strict on the scholastic criterion, like teacher 13 who during the art and craft session got the children to draw a vase very similar to the real one on his desk, in terms of size, shape and colour, rejecting children's productions that didn't conform. Teacher 6 made the children write calligraphy from the pattern given to them. In general, teachers attempted to help their pupils to master their skills, learning, and good behaviour by building up to them an optimal level of competence, comprehension and performance.

9.5.2.2. Norm Referenced Assessments

Routinely teachers attempted to encourage children to imitate the good performance of a peer. In one class, for example, a boy who had not written his homework because he was playing the previous afternoon, when he told the truth to the teacher 18 received congratulations in front of the class so that the others would imitate his honesty. Here an affective quality was the 'norm' of behaviour.

Teacher 14 asked a girl to show her exercise book to the class, because her writing was neat and the paragraphs clearly separated. Then the teacher made favourable comments on the layout of the work and asked the others to try improve their own writings taking as a 'model' example the girl's work. This 'neatness' was the basis for a criterion-referenced assessment as well.

That way often teachers were found to apply 'norm-referenced' assessments. One might remark that such practices were in conflict with the official education declarations for equality and commonality, since there was no provision for pupils

with lower abilities but they had to compete with their peers for the same objectives, working on the same tasks.

Reading their creative writing in front of the class was a common evaluative activity for pupils exercised in almost all classrooms. Its official aim was the peer evaluation of a given pupil's composition by high-lighting positive points, namely, 'good' expressions and original ideas. However, often the peers or the teacher expressed criticism about poor work, resulting in discouragement and disappointment for the 'author'. Here, at the last phase of the assessment process, are obvious the side effects that this approach had for different ability children.

Comparison between children was often found to be an underlying classroom goal, although official guide-lines (Law 1566, 1985) advised teachers to avoid this and to encourage cooperation. Most teachers consciously or subconsciously appeared to attempt to prompt pupils to emulate their more successful classmates and to seek for higher stakes. A teacher in favour of competition explained:

> The demands of real life are different from those the new curricula and guide-lines attempt to transmit. Everywhere there is strong competition. See for example sports, economic wars, market forces etc. There is no ideal society in which people do not strive to dominate each other. I think children have to compete for higher achievements. (T2)

Others, however, expressed the opposite view:

> Competition is a bad habit, it destroys good relationships among people. I support cooperation instead because I believe in the powerful benefits children derive from it. (T1)

Two issues arise from these views. First, the constraints and dilemmas teachers face (Berlak and Berlak, 1981), as well as the question of policy and practice agreement. These different perspectives of groups of teachers reflect again different 'assessment styles'.

Observed teachers rarely organised their teaching by grouping children for work. The common approach was for pupils to work individually, without speaking or assisting each other. Besides, teachers by frequent praising and encouraging good performance or work of individual pupils, were on the one hand deliberately encouraging children for learning, but on the other hand, perhaps unintentionally, they were fostering competitive trends within the class, by applying norm-referenced approaches (Shipman, 1983; Crooks, 1988). Such a competitive approach had its disadvantages according to a teacher:

> First, it creates negative results, failure and disappointment for the less able children and second, it poisons children's social relationships with their peers.(T17)

9.5.2.3. Ipsative Assessments

In five classes when the observer examined children's workbooks he found written comments like these:

> You're going backwards, it was neater last time, you must try harder. (T2)
>
> This is much better than your last week's composition, well done. Keep it going. (T2)
>
> I'm very pleased with your improvement since last term. (T8)
>
> That's it Stella, this writing is much better than your last one, because you have improved the way you use full stops and capital letters after them. You have only three mistakes now, compared with nine last time (T14).

It is evident from the above extracts that the teachers considered the pupil's own past progress as a point of reference and 'interpreted' the evidence of the new work against it. A child was reported as better or worse than before (Shipman, 1983; Satterly, 1989). As many teachers said, such procedures aimed to help individual pupils understand the difference between their present and past achievements, to see their weaknesses, to be encouraged and finally, to become aware of what they need to improve.

In this way teachers argued, pupils could learn how to do self-assessment and self corrections, and hence to become aware of themselves, their strengths, weaknesses and needs. It was a way to enhance their self-concept. This approach, they added, avoids competition between children, with its bad side effects. However, it appeared to be rather rare, since as most of the teachers said, lack of time and the high teacher-pupil ratio prohibited its frequent use:

> It is apparent to everyone that the teacher's role is very demanding in terms of time, and productivity. How can I find time to personally deal with thirty plus pupils? When do I find time to teach? (T8)

> ...and there is not only teaching, we have to keep them in order, and to cope with so many other pressures. Even so, there are times when we spend some minutes discussing the pupils' progress with them, and we do try to assist them to overcome their difficulties.(T4)

These two extracts underline first, the classroom constraints which prevent the teachers from applying self-referenced assessments, second, their anxiety to control simultaneously their pupils by considering 'coping strategies', and third their commitment to help individually their children.

Overall, the interpretation of the collected evidence was tacit and intuitive, based upon knowledge of pupils that teachers had acquired through experience, (Bachor & Anderson, 1994; Pollard et al., 1994).

9.5.3. 3rd Phase: Teacher Responses

9.5.3.1. Non Verbal, Para - linguistic Responses

Among the main advantages of observation, as a technique for data collection, is that observers can catch para-linguistic expressions which often accompany verbal

expressions and convey a particular meaning to actions (Pollard, 1990). The researcher noticed numerous such non-verbal assessments ranging from a glance and frowning to a nod or just moving a finger.

In one class, for instance, during the lesson two girls at the back row were talking in a whisper. The teacher saw them walked towards them and by making eye contact redirected their attention to the class (controlled them).

This was a typical example of a complete assessment episode. The teacher first gathered evidence by observing the girls. Second, this behavioural information was immediately interpreted as undesirable. Third, at the same moment came the response, i.e. the teacher walked towards the children to show them that they have to stop and attend the lesson. Fourth, the assessment had two implications on the girls; first, they understood that their action was undesirable, and second, they stopped talking, and redirected their attention to the lesson. It is interesting to note that the episode was completed in a lightning speed and its stages overlap.

The significance of such non-verbal responses, as teachers said, is important, since they are used, often unconsciously, to keep the flow of teaching smooth without interruptions.

9.5.3.2. Teacher written and oral comments

Teachers' verbal reactions to children's effort, and products were the most overt aspects of assessment. Such comments varied from praise to criticism or perhaps took a neutral stance with no comments at all. Typically, teachers' oral comments were positive regarding academic aspects with the aim of encouraging children's learning effort, and negative when referred to behavioural aspects aiming to maintain order and to avoid disruptiveness or repetition of undesirable actions.

Teacher 18 for example, publicly criticised an inattentive girl looking out of the window in order to deter such behaviour from other children. The same teacher publicly congratulated another girl for her correct writing on the board, to encourage other children to follow her example (criterion and norm-referenced approach).

The quality of teacher oral or written comments (feedback) on children's performance or work, seemed to be of great significance for them. Typically, marks or grades were accompanied by some general and brief comments such as: 'Well done', 'You need to improve it', 'Good', 'Poor', 'This is better', 'excellent', and the like. Children's reaction to the above was typically expressed like this:

> Look, I've got a 'B' and a comment: "Good, but you have to improve", but I don't know exactly what I need to do to improve to get an A.

This illuminates the need children feel for comments to be specific (Sadler, 1989; Airasian, 1991). In the children's exercise books examined by the investigator this specificity was found to be regularly present in only three classes. The following comments illustrate this finding:

> Well done, Matina, you've improved since last time, but try to avoid repeating things by reviewing your writing before you give it to me. (T2)

> This is much better, but you have to be careful always to use capital letters after a full stop. (T10)

> Well done, Yiorgos, this essay is much better than your last one, because this is neater and you have got better with verbs and synonyms. You have only three repetitions now, compared with six last time. (T8)

Such comments as children said, seemed to provide them with beneficial feedback about where they went wrong, and encouraged them to improve. In a similar way

teacher 18 drew a smiling face under a girl's work, and told her the meaning in a whisper way as she got to the girl's desk:

> Maria, you've got all the exercises right. That's why this face is happy and smiles at you. Try to work in the same way in future, so you'll get more smiling faces. Well done. (T18)

At break Maria triumphantly showed the class her 'smiling face', drawn by the teacher. Here again is clear the last phase of the assessment process, i.e. impact on pupils. It was common practice for teachers of young children to draw faces or stars on their work, something which pupils seemed to understand and enjoy.

However, typically, teachers' comments were frequently general and short, without explanation what the strengths and mistakes were and how improvements could be made or maintained. Phrases like: "Very good", "Good", "You have to try harder", "good effort", just a tick (v), or a signature on pupils' work were very commonly used (assessment styles).

When pupils asked by the investigator to interpret the meaning of a tick or a signature, said: "My work is O.K.". Others, however, were at a loss: "I haven't a clue why the teacher signed her name on my writing!...". Their teachers however thought that these 'symbols' conveyed the message they attached to them, namely, a correct, good piece of work.

Such symbols, i.e. faces, signatures, stars, ticks and the like were unique codes for every class, they were part of the 'private assessment language' and only the teacher and the pupils of that particular class could fully interpret them. This raises the issue of how well teachers and pupils communicate through the assessment language. The significance of teacher comments and of the 'assessment language' is examined in detail in chapter 11.

A typical sample of poor and negative comments appeared on a boy's workbook: "This is poor, you must pay more attention" or "you keep making the same mistakes, could you be careful?" The vast majority of teachers observed, approximately 70%, used, non-specific comments. About 53% of the questionnaire respondents indicated that their comments are general and short.

9.5.3.3. Using assessment results

Most teachers based their final judgments on the results they had got from previous assessments. Friday's language remedial lessons, for instance, based on results gathered during the past week according to the official directives.

Although most of the teachers said that they used results from their assessments to give individual help to their pupils, less than half of the observed regularly conducted it. Class teaching was the modal approach. Teachers complained that time and class size, prevented their fully applying it. Instead, they often organised whole class sessions to provide remedial help to a larger number of children.

It was tacit the immediate use of results of the numerous assessments which spontaneously took place in every class. Teachers used such results either to monitor the instruction or to keep it smoothly flowing. However, typically they did not use the assessment results in order to improve learning, but for summative purposes. Nearly all teachers said that they also used assessment results to inform parents about their children's progress, i.e. for communication and accountability.

9.5.3.4. Reviewing instruction

Sometimes, at the end of the teaching session another kind of assessment was used, to review or summarise the main points of the material, and to check for any gaps in pupils' understanding. This sort of assessment took the form of teacher's or

pupils' questions, narration, oral pin-pointing of the core ideas and the like. Some teachers conducted such review assessments by giving written tasks to the class, or by observing children's performance. Three teachers (2,7,13), carried out a rather systematic review (different assessment style), either by often writing the main points on the board, eliciting them from the pupils, or by requiring their pupils to write at home a summary from the lesson to be checked in the next lesson. Typically, it was found during the observations that reviewing instruction was a rather rare practice although the teacher manual did in fact suggest it.

9.5.3.5. Marking and grading

During the third stage of the assessment process teachers make judgements about the quality of pupils' performance or work they have gathered and put a value on it in the form of grades or marks (Airasian, 1991). Observed teachers used a variety of marking or grading forms ranging from numerical scales, marks, percentages and fractions, through verbal description of pupils' achievements and letter grades with or without a verbal description. The common marking system encountered involved the marking scale (1-10) used for many years in the past (chapter 6), (up to 1981) although some teachers used fractions of correct answers out of the total answers, and others percentages or even numbers with decimal subdivisions. It is interesting that about two thirds of the observed teachers appeared to use such numerical marking all the time. It is also interesting, to see some children's views regarding marking (4th phase of episodes):

> I need to know in more detail about my progress. When the teacher writes under my work: 'Very good' or 'More effort' these don't mean much to me. I'd prefer a number to show how much I've improved since my last work, so that I can see at once if I've got better or not.

> If we get marks I would try harder. The lower marks I get the more effort I make to improve. Apart from this, my parents will get to know, and they will either help or push me to do better.

A girl indicated an extrinsic motivation:

> My mum and dad demand better and better scores from me, and I do my best to please them. They give me presents as a reward!

Another girl said:

> I do my best to get high marks 'cause I want to become a solicitor.

The latter views show parents' influence and aspirations for their children (Sharp and Green, 1975). Parents' ambitions arguably play an important role for children's future in Greek society (Makrinioti, 1982; Papastamatis, 1988; Starida, 1990), an issue which is discussed in more detail in chapter 6.

As teachers argued they used marks and grades quite often mainly to motivate and to convey to children and their parents how much progress had been made. Teachers expressed contradictory views regarding the issue. Those in favour made such comments:

> Parents are kept informed and if they wish they can help their children. Otherwise, without any marking how will they be made aware of their children's progress? (T9)

> Since the old marking system was abolished, pupils do not work hard, and parents do not pay the same attention to their children's school work. The latter is even more so now that the entrance examination to the secondary school has been abolished. (T11)

> I give them marks because it makes them produce very good results. My experience has taught me that the stricter on marking I am the better results I get. (T7)

> We must implement strict assessments and restore the old official marking system since parents and children demand marks. (T13)

Others advocated description of the children's achievements and individual abilities in line with the ideas of the child centred education (Sharp and Green, 1975; Jasman, 1987).

> No marks, we must explain in detail to the children their deficiencies, and then help them to overcome them. We have to emphasize the good points of children's work. (T1)

Three teachers (T9, T10, T3) mentioned that marks and grades are useful to inform the next teacher or the next school the child moves to. This obvious teachers' confusion in using marks might be due to the frequent changes of the grading system (chapter 6) that were imposed during the decade before the data collection of the present study (Bouzakis, 1988; Avdali, 1989; Mylonas, 1993).

Recording of classroom assessment results was typically expressed through a few brief notes, grades or marks. The vast majority of teachers kept such information in their head (Pollard et al., 1994). Teachers' reports were addressed by and large to the parents. In general, only oral reporting took place. The only official school report about their children's progress parents receive was the final promotion or school leaving certificate, which included a general average grade with a description of pupil's achievements, and a word regarding the child's general behaviour during the past school year.

The next section reports findings regarding the content of classroom assessments.

9.6. WHAT TO ASSESS?

Introduction

As mentioned earlier assessment episodes are developed in four phases, namely: Evidence collection, interpretation, teacher response, and implications of teacher's response. What follows reports observational findings that fall into the first phase of the assessment process, i.e. examines the content of the evidence that teachers collect.

Sometimes assessment was generally related to the kinds of problems the children face in one area or another of the curriculum. At other times assessment concerned the over-all intellectual progress of the pupil, over a number of curricular areas and over a period of time. Often teachers attempted to diagnose their pupils' existing knowledge of a specific subject, the weaknesses and the gaps pupils had, in order to plan the next steps or to undertake remedial action. This part reports separately assessments of a cognitive nature from the non-cognitive ones.

9.6.1. COGNITIVE DOMAIN

9.6.1.1. Learning objectives in Greek primary school

When describing what teachers were assessing it is interesting to start with the learning objectives pupils had to attain. The wider content of assessments was officially pre-specified through the National Curriculum aims which are broken down into learning objectives for each teaching unit that pupils are expected to achieve.

The influence of learning objectives upon observed teachers' practices and views is examined in the light of Mager's (1975) definition suggesting that an educational objective is the behaviour which the pupil is expected to demonstrate after the end of an instructional process. This behaviour has to be observable and in principle testable.

9.6.1.2. Specific vs relational objectives

It is the case that such learning objectives are described in detail within the curricula and the teacher's manual. Of course, the specificity of the objectives varies according to the subject matter. In core subjects such as Mathematics and Greek Language, learning objectives appeared to be rather specific and detailed.

The following examples of learning objectives for one teaching session, as a unit, extracted from the appropriate teachers' manual may be used to illustrate the point.

> **Maths, third year-level:** The learner is expected by the end of the instruction to be able by using the proper formula to calculate the area of a given rectangle. or
>
> **Maths, second year-level:** The learner is expected by the end of the instruction to be able to recite and write correctly the six times table.
>
> **Language, first year-level:** The learner is expected by the end of the instruction to be able to recite and write correctly the days of the week. or
>
> **Language, second year-level:** The learner is expected by the end of the instruction to be able to identify and write down the verbs in a given piece of text.

From the above extracts one can see the emphasis that is placed on expressing the objectives in terms of overt, detailed activity, which is determined by the appropriate verb, and the content of the objective. 'Objectives' in other subjects, however, were general in nature, i.e. 'aims' rather than 'objectives'. Consider, for example, the following from a History lesson:

> **History, fourth year-level:** The learner is expected by the end of the instruction to have a stronger sense of national identity and to be able to understand some of the values for which our ancestors defended Greece during its long history.

This example shows the kind of general, rather vague and indefinite objectives that are included in many teaching units. Subjects such as aesthetics or environmental studies did not contain specific pre-determined objectives. Rather they involved relational or open-ended goals. Art and craft objectives as they were described in the teacher's manual were explicit and implicit, with more emphasis placed on the latter.

The goal was to encourage pupils to express freely their individual ideas and talents. The teacher therefore, had to accept the children's ideas and help to develop them. Note that this was what was laid down in the official documents. Yet, the degree of realisation of these orders in the classroom practice is an important question about which the research findings might yield some insights.

The subject of environmental studies was taught in the lower year-levels. It included topics on history, geography, religious studies and other themes of a 'social' nature. Its purpose is to help pupils attain general open-ended 'aims', i.e. to develop their critical thinking skills, practise them in discovery learning and to introduce them in social and cooperative contexts by stimulating classroom discourse among pupils under the teacher's leadership. Consider, for instance, the following 'objective':

> **First year-level environmental studies:** Pupils have to look at the pictures carefully, and then try to interpret their meaning. All views are acceptable. The aim is to stimulate discussion and encourage pupils to participate and exchange ideas.

In most classes indeed such scenes were observed. In one case, the teacher showed two pictures to the class, one of a village and one of a city and asked pupils to describe them and to pin-point differences. She made a point of asking shy or less able children first in order, as she put it, "to give them a chance to say something, to express their ideas". Then the other pupils were brought into the discussion. Such activities, as teachers argued, aimed to encourage pupils to participate in discussions and to foster discovery learning approaches. Teachers also stressed that they did not assess children in the narrow sense in such subjects, in terms of mastery knowledge, by giving marks or grades, and the children felt more comfortable. Moreover, the 'objectives' here were rather unspecified, unpredictable and wide.

9.6.1.3. What sort of objectives did teachers promote?

It is worth citing here teachers' views regarding their reluctance to assess subjects like history or environmental studies:

> I cannot evaluate pupils' attainments in such subjects. I take more note of their participation in discussion, leadership qualities, verbal facility, or their background knowledge about the topic.(T 10)

Another teacher said:

> For me the primary school's aim is to help pupils' socialisation, welfare and learning by fostering intrinsic values. Teaching should not be based on closed, specific objectives; instead it should be open, accepting children's individual ideas and interests and helping to develop them. (T 17)

This view however, was in contrast to the prevalent trend to put the emphasis on the basics, as a teacher underlined:

> Mathematics and language after all, are what count in society now and even more in the future. Who will be concerned with humanities, aesthetics and so on, in our era of rapid technological progress, multinational business cooperation and sharp international competition? (T7)

Others like the following face different dilemmas:

> Often, when I'm wondering what shall I assess? I'm confronted with the dilemma of what is important for pupils to learn? since from time to time educational values and desiderata change and, you know, I become more confused. (T 3)

9.6.1.4. Teachers' awareness of objectives

Greek primary school teachers have a range of objectives to attain by completing each lesson explicitly stated in their manual. Observed teachers were asked to spell out the day's objectives it was assumed that this would determine their teaching. Typically, however, they appeared to have a rather vague idea of an improvement towards which they were expecting to urge the majority of their pupils by the end of the lesson. The following teacher's view illustrates the issue:

> I'm not always consciously aware of what outcomes I'm looking for. Sometimes, I may say 'Let's see if they can manage to write an essay of one hundred words' or 'I'm interested in their attentiveness during the whole time I'm teaching'; but I also often make judgements at the same time on other things such as getting actively involved in the lesson, or taking homework seriously. Overall, I'm not clear of what and why I assess in the complex classroom environment. (T 8)

On very rare occasions did teachers appear explicitly to assess pupils against the particular lesson's objectives in order to evaluate pupils' learning and their own teaching effectiveness. As a teacher said: "There isn't any need to clarify objectives as they are self-evident". Other teachers said that the title of a teaching unit indicates the wider objectives which in that way are made explicit to teachers and pupils from the beginning of each session. One teacher argued that the whole instruction evolves around these objectives.

It was unusual to find teachers reviewing their teaching after the lesson in the light of their objectives. This was explained by a teacher:

> Well, it is implied by the lesson's structure and content that by the end of the lesson the majority of children will be able to do whatever the objectives stated. In addition, the textbook tasks aim to check the consolidation of the objectives as well. Hence, we tend to emphasise a step-by-step progression as we see it rather than sticking rigidly to the objectives. (T10)

Such views indicate that those teachers typically seemed not to care so much about the lesson's objectives and such like outcomes of instruction, but about the actual lesson's processes such as examining, questioning, listening, demonstrating, giving work, explaining and helping individuals. They seemed to believe, perhaps unconsciously, that objectives, tasks and instructional content were the responsibility of others (Airasian, 1991).

In general, teachers did not appear to plan in written form their instructional activities using the prescribed objectives. They said that the whole plan was included in the manual, and they also asserted that such time consuming processes

of written preparation, however essential they might be for student-teachers and for beginning teachers, were not necessary for classroom teachers who have by a natural progression become experts at their job, teaching as they do the same or similar age-levels for years. In addition, they insisted that they retained a wide awareness of the lesson's objectives and they modified their practices in accordance with them. Typically, teachers indicated an uncertainty and ambiguity as far as their awareness of the educational objectives was concerned. The general picture indicates rather intuitive, spontaneous, informal practices. Similar findings are reported by the PACE project (Broadfoot, et. al, 1991; Pollard et al., 1994).

A study of (Markandonis and Cassotakis, 1979) of Greek secondary school teachers regarding their understanding of their subjects' educational objectives and some knowledge about Bloom's taxonomy revealed that 95% had never read or heard about educational objectives. From the remaining 5% who had some idea only one teacher was able to provide a concrete example of such an objective. Cassotakis (1981), referring to curricula before 1985 writes:

> Educational aims included in the Greek primary curricula were too vague and indefinite. Thus, the teacher goes on blindly towards the lesson's outcome as he anticipates what the aim of the curriculum stated. However, he is not confident about what the objective actually was (p. 112).

Overall, most of the teachers agreed that teaching goals refer to aspects of the child's knowledge, understanding or behaviour that they have been trying to change. Moreover, teachers argued that they were evaluated far more qualities, (other than scholastic) than is commonly supposed.

Here emerge two of the main questions of this study: First, whether teachers are aware of the potential of assessment such as the importance of the learning

objectives, and their role in driving teaching and learning; and second, how big is the gap between existing practices and the desirable.

9.6.1.5. Assessment of lower level objectives

The content of cognitive characteristics teachers assessed could be generally classified within the lower levels of Bloom's (1956) educational objectives taxonomy, i.e. they were frequently seeking for knowledge, comprehension and sometimes application of knowledge. It was rare, and mostly at the higher grades, that teachers were found to be assessing pupils' competence in analysis, synthesis and evaluation of cognitive information.

Overall, the cognitive attributes teachers attempted to assess included knowledge, skills, task performance, learning, comprehension, memorisation and thinking. Skills like writing, drawing, working on tasks, seemed to be the modal objectives for the first year-levels. Memorisation appeared to be the main achievement typically sought at all levels.

Two hypotheses regarding teachers practices emerge from this. First, that teachers placed the weight on lower level objectives because it is easier to assess them. Second, they may focus on lower levels because they believe that children have to foster the basics (Rowntree, 1977; Cassotakis, 1981; Satterly, 1989; Airasian, 1991).

In higher year-levels the pattern was for teachers to assess understanding of the knowledge provided within the classroom, namely the ability to interpret ideas and to extrapolate trends and consequences. Similar assessments for comprehension are included in the pupil's textbook tasks which ask children to answer questions by referring back to the text.

Recalling was associated with rote learning, used for instance, to teach multiplication tables. In some cases pupils had also to learn by heart famous poems, prayers and grammatical rules. The explanation teachers gave was that recitation, according to their long teaching experience, had proved to be an effective way of helping pupils' learning.

9.6.1.6. Pupils awareness of lesson's objectives

Another aspect associated with assessment was that teachers by and large omitted to state clearly to their pupils before the instruction the objectives of a given teaching unit, (Broadfoot, 1977; Stiggins and Bridgeford, 1985). In four cases there were found teachers who explicitly stated the lesson's objectives to their pupils in advance: "Today we will learn how to calculate the area of a circle". Typical expressions for starting the next lesson used were such as: "Let's see what's next; Let's now go to the next; Let's go ahead", and the like. In other cases the teachers themselves introduced the new by linking it with the previous lesson. An alternative routine was for the teacher to tell pupils to open their books and together with the teacher to explore the new material.

9.6.1.7. Criteria of good work towards objectives

When considering educational objectives one has to think about pre-determined standards or criteria of mastery against which these objectives might be attained. One also needs some indication of the lower acceptable level of attainment when assessing pupils' work or performance. In one case teacher 3 told the children that their ten maths exercises would be assessed in reference to the total ten correct results, and more than five correct would count as acceptable. Another teacher when giving an essay topic to the children told them that to be classified as "good" the essay should be neat and legible with clearly expressed ideas.

When teachers were asked to state clearly the criteria for assessing a particular piece of work, most of them appeared unable to articulate such features. They usually stated some general criteria, such as a good, neat, well organised work. It became evident from discussions with teachers that typically they only had a vague idea of the characteristics that comprise a good or poor piece of work. In addition, the official guide-lines, as has been noted, often omitted explicit written criteria.

It was a common phenomenon in the observed classes for teachers to omit stating to the children the assessment criteria (Sadler, 1989). Several teachers said that they had explained such things at the beginning of the school year, and during the daily instruction they often reminded the children of these criteria, explicitly or indirectly.

However, when a teacher in a rural school asked his class to write an essay on a particular topic he also explained to them the standards he was expecting:

> ...and remember, that a good piece of work is one that's neat, without repetitions, with few spelling mistakes, and keeps your ideas together clearly. A piece of work which is messy, with lots of spelling mistakes and which is hard for a reader to understand, is obviously poor. (T17)

Typically, pupils had to work on a task rather mechanically in order to complete it without a clear idea of what counted as a good standard. The children expressed such views:

> We always need to know, where we're going, what the work is and what the teacher wants, otherwise how can we make progress?
>
> When I know where I'm going I'll do my best to make a good job of it, whatever it is.
>
> It's most important for us to know in advance, of what makes a piece of work 'poor' or 'good'.

It is obvious here the 4th phase of the assessment process, namely the implications that have on pupils the lack of knowledge of the standards against which they are assessed.

9.6.1.8. Process or product?

Most teachers were interested in the outcome of a pupil's work. Less frequently they appeared to seek for the way it was produced, i.e. how the work was planned, approached, executed and presented. When, for instance, teachers were scanning pupils' exercise books, they had in front of their eyes the outcome but they could only guess the actual procedures children followed to reach that result.

Seven out of twenty teachers were observed to intervene during the time when the children were working on a task, attempting to offer immediate feedback and help, especially to the weak pupils, for recognising and avoiding mistakes. But the norm was for the teachers to assess pupils' work when they had finished it, so that there was no chance for remedial intervention. They proffered the conventional reason that time shortage and the size of their classes prevented their doing this job properly. Some teachers' perspectives however, are revealing, like this 'ideal' one:

> I need to understand the significance of assessment while the work is carried out- before the results are known- because only during this stage can I provide aid to the children to protect them from similar pitfalls in future. (T9)

But this is more realistic:

> We have to appreciate that we frequently gauge success or failure in terms of the final goals pupils have attained. But in this way we overlook and underestimate the actual processes they followed to reach the result. (T20)

It seemed that although these teachers are aware of the value of the learning process they finally focus on and assess children's outcomes for reasons which were well explained in their words above. It is interesting that in problem solving four

teachers found to demonstrate to their class step by step how they reached the result, by articulating their thinking. Then they called up some children to solve similar problems by thinking aloud. That way the others could learn a useful process of problem solving.

9.6.1.9. Process devaluation

More than half of the teachers were noticed to 'underestimate' the value of pupils' effort before the achievement of the final result. Such illustrative examples were more evident when teachers were marking maths problems they had set. They checked only the results of the problems, and whenever they discovered them to be wrong they considered the whole pupil effort as wrong. "In the end it's the results that count" teacher 9 said.

Five teachers were observed when they were looking at the actual process the children followed up to the point where they had gone wrong. Those teachers carefully considered the sequence of steps the pupils followed and pin-pointed the point at which the mistake emerged. Then, they praised the children for their effort and the correctness of the process they had followed up to then. Further, they explained the mistake to the pupil and attempted to arrive at the correct answer cooperatively. This however, was time consuming, and the teacher usually worked it out with the pupil(s) during the break. If many children failed in the same exercise or problem, the teacher analysed and explained it for the whole class.

According to the official guide-lines the teacher has to walk around the classroom while pupils carry out their classwork, to observe the ways in which pupils complete their tasks. That is, to obtain insights into such processes so as to be able to provide immediate feedback, help and remedy to individuals. However, most of the teachers were standing or sitting at their desk when pupils were working and just took the completed product at the end.

The fact that typically teachers found to assess the products of children's work and to overlook the processes followed to achieve them is opposite to the principles of the progressive pedagogy which focuses on processes rather than products (Jasman, 1987). These findings raise again the question of agreement between rhetoric and reality.

9.6.2. What traits teachers were looking for

The range of cognitive qualities which were assessed was broad and extend from the lower order mental skills such as the recall of factual information, to the higher order of interpretation, extrapolation and synthesizing. More than half of the teachers insisted during informal discussions that they placed most weight on children's academic achievements when they were assessing them.

Regarding the accumulation of general knowledge these teachers typically seemed to check whether pupils had acquired large amount of knowledge, especially that included within their textbooks. Samples of that knowledge therefore, were frequently assessed informally to see how far the pupils had acquired it, by recalling facts, dates, rules, terms, definitions, principles and the like.

Three teachers remarked that they were also interested in children's intelligence, in terms of how quick they were in understanding the taught material, and reacting by answering the teacher's questions. Four experienced teachers in rural schools insisted that they valued the neat layout of children's writing more than their creative content when this was unorganised and badly presented.

9.6.2.1. Mastery of Knowledge and skills

Teachers typically were constantly assessing their pupils to see to what extent they had mastered and accumulated the prerequisite knowledge and skills in order to

'digest' the new material, and in the long term to proceed to the next year-level or the secondary school. According to most teachers' views, the predominant aim of primary schooling is simply to: 'equip 'em with basic knowledge and skills'. It is interesting to note, however, that the only source of knowledge seemed to be the teacher from whom pupils expected to acquire it (chapter 6). In addition, there was a single textbook for every subject which communicates the prevailing ideologies and values for reproduction at schools (Mavrogiorgos, 1988).

Teachers sought to gauge the extent to which their pupils had mastered the material taught so far by observing children's performance and work; by addressing various tasks to them, either those included in the textbook, or teacher-made ones; by constantly asking them a great variety of questions; by correcting them, and by modifying instruction. However, the whole process lacked smoothness, it was often disrupted by children asking for something, teasing each other, or being inattentive.

9.6.2.2. Emphasis on the basics

In daily classroom practice observed teachers typically seemed to be concerned by and large about the pupils' mastery of the 3 Rs, rather than the fostering of children's critical thinking or creativity, or about the development of the pupil's whole personality as the curriculum and (Law, 1566, 1985) stated. This is similar to the (Broadfoot et al., 1993) findings regarding the French assessment system.

Both the modern Greek and maths take seventy four teaching hours weekly, whilst all the others together are taught in seventy two (table 1). However, (Law 1566, 1985) and the teacher manual declared that primary education must focus on how pupils learn, and on the fostering of creativity and pupils' critical thinking.

Typically, observed teachers appeared to see children as students and future adults (Berlak and Berlak 1981), stressing their academic progress and mastery of the

basics, by placing more emphasis on 'knowledge to be acquired, and objectives to be attained' (Broadfoot, 1991). Such practices however, were in contrast to the official rhetoric (Law 1566, 1985) that teachers have to treat the children as entire and unique personalities, which differ from adults in the way they perceive the world and learning.

9.6.2.3. Suppressing creativity

Another notable aspect of the kind of approach which was often observed concerns the 'ideal' product towards which pupils had to orientate their work. During art and craft in particular, the predominant approach was for the pupils to imitate the model or pattern provided by the teacher. This was usually some object from the natural world. The 'model' typically sat on the teacher's desk and the pupils were expected to 'copy' it. Teacher 2 for instance, asked pupils to draw the vase which was on the table. When some children made an abstract drawing the teacher devalued it as deficient in 'reality'. Abstract or creative products made by the pupils were considered of lower value. This was in the same vein with the expectations on writing, designing or drawing. In addition, in the majority of the classrooms observed the majority of the displays were either teacher-made or of children's work very similar to the ideal. One could make a few points regarding the significant of this. First, as the teacher 2 said: "my pupils in the attempt to make something similar to the 'ideal' they know where they are going, and bit by bit they could master it". But, in the same time this suppress children's creative potential. In addition, those pupils who have not such good skills say in art and craft, or drawing, they are constantly disappointed since very rarely will make something like the model. The dimension of teachers' control on children's learning is also apparent.

The only example of creative expression was the creative writing that, (according to the curriculum), every fortnight children had to do, which was supposed to be

inspired from their reading text. However, typically, teachers assessed this by looking at spelling, syntax and tidiness rather than children's fluency and original ideas (Broadfoot and Osborn, 1987; Broadfoot, et al., 1991).

9.6.3. Differentiation

A very important issue concerning all observed classes was the expectation for all pupils to attain the same objectives regardless of their differences in ability (Gipps, 1990). No provision was made for the bright or the less able. Several of these objectives were often unrealisable for the weak pupils, whilst they were excessively unchallenging for the bright ones. The following examples from the pupils' perspective illustrate the issue. After the language lesson the researcher approached Panos, a less able boy, (as his teacher said), ten years old, and asked him whether he found the tasks difficult.

> Panos: Many of the textbook tests and exercises are difficult for me and for some others to complete. First they are difficult and we don't understand 'em, and second, there are too many of them, so that we never manage to finish on time. I would prefer to work on something I could do.

Complaints however, were also expressed by Koula, a girl who was classified by her teacher among the 'top' learners of the class.

> Koula: I'm fed up with these textbook tasks. They are not challenging for many of the pupils. They're too easy for me, I'm always one of the first to finish. But then I have to wait for the rest of the children to finish before we start something else and I get really bored.

These extracts belong to the last phase of the assessment process and reveal how different are the implications caused by the same tasks for all the children.

Since Greek classrooms are 'mixed ability' all pupils at the same year-level are confronted with the same body of material and are expected, in theory, to master

the same objectives. This has been declared by the state as the provision of equal opportunities for all children, and as an attempt to establish national standards and homogeneity (chapter 6). However, the officials chose to overlook the fact that in the first place, children have different individual abilities, and second, they come from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Accordingly, they do not start their learning from the same level (Mavrogiorgos, 1988; Gipps, 1990; Bouzakis, 1993). The teaching material is also centrally designed by the government educational agencies targeting the middle ability pupil. All pupils are expected to master the knowledge and skills prescribed for their year-level.

Since there was not provision for pupil's individual abilities, and the material targeted the average pupil, often bright children felt boredom having finished quickly their tasks and waiting the bulk of the class to finish, or the slower children were striving to finish their work on time. Similar didactic pedagogy report studies from primary education in France (Sharpe, 1992b, Broadfoot et al. 1994). Moreover, in Greece the official guide-lines do not provide teachers with specific instructions regarding the level of mastery which is to be recognised as acceptable. This lack of assessment tasks differentiated in difficulty, as teachers said, placed more constraints on them both in terms of time for making such tasks, and in terms of unsuitability for the children who found these tasks either too difficult or insufficiently challenging. This is a result of policy makers' lack of awareness of the assessment side effects, (a crucial question of this study).

9.6.4. Assessing teaching effectiveness

When attempting to describe 'what' Greek primary teachers were assessing during their instruction it is necessary to take account of the underlying goal i.e. their teaching effectiveness as a whole. In general, teachers argued that the extent of the success of this general outcome was indicated mainly by the proportion of children participating in activities, or by the extent to which the pupils were demonstrably

learning. However, the researcher felt that the latter was very difficult to be judged.

A routine approach observed nearly in every classroom, often perhaps subconsciously, was the teachers' constant attempt to gauge during their teaching whether their pupils understood the lesson by asking them if they were following. The children's answer was usually "yes"', but the teachers cross-checked by observing and 'assessing' children's reactions, such as the number of hands raised in a question, how bored or alert pupils were looking and similar non-verbal cues. As a village school teacher said when commenting on the lesson just finished:

> When I saw blank looks on my pupils' faces and got no raised hands when I asked questions I immediately interpreted this as a negative evaluation for my teaching, and so I decided to stop and repeated the main points. (T15)

Teachers very often appeared to assess their teaching effectiveness by observing pupils' behaviour and reading "the light in their eyes" (Shipman, 1983). Children may simply show lack of interest in a certain subject. This in turn, is an item of feedback information for the teachers which they might interpret accurately and may seek for ways to attract their interest again. For instance, after such an incident in one class the teacher changed the approach from lecturing to classwork activity. In another session the teacher stopped and asked pupils to make a drawing inspired by the passage in question. Others expressed the common view that teaching effectiveness is reflected in pupils' attainments on tests, tasks and the like. As a teacher put it:

> I 'measure' my teaching effectiveness by assessing my pupils progress in general every day, but I also think that there is a long term outcome which appears after several weeks work in the classroom. (T 11)

Regarding teachers' self-evaluation, however, it seemed that most of those teachers did not deliberately address such processes. Most of them argued that pupils' textbook tasks are designed to evaluate instruction and the teachers do not need to concern themselves about it. This was another evidence of the importance of classroom assessment in particular to assist teaching.

9.6.5. Axiomatic rather than problematic knowledge

Although the official educational philosophy for primary schooling aimed to help pupils master the necessary processes and skills leading to discovery learning and to gradually become independent learners (Law 1566, 1985), in classroom practice this philosophy did not fully materialise. The teacher typically, possessed the knowledge which was transmitted to pupils as a ready-made product, not as a problematic situation. There was only one answer accepted as correct on teacher's questions; alternative ones were often rejected. Teachers typically were found attempting to exert their control on children's knowledge and speech by leading them to the one correct answer by providing cues or rephrasing questions.

The didactic model was the typical teaching style. The teacher did most of the speaking, the children were listening, and the knowledge was delivered axiomatically. Thus, pupils' contributions had either reproduce something already known by the teacher or be judged correct or wrong according to his/her criteria. Rarely are there found exploratory or discovery-learning approaches. Sharpe (1992b) studied French primary classrooms and reports a very similar pedagogy which he called "Catechistic teaching style". This similarity is not surprising since on the one hand, the Greek education System is based on the French patterns, and on the other, that both are highly centralised systems (chapter 6).

9.6.6. Manual-centred instruction

Interestingly, in most classes teachers seemed to be very much dependent on both their manual and the pupil's textbook as the only resources on which they based their instruction. Sometimes teachers appeared blindly to follow the manual, applying the activities mentioned within it and even using the pre-specified particular questions (Mavrogiorgos, 1988).

Teaching was rather prescriptive in terms of structure and content, which activities to apply and when. Most teachers followed their manual closely and they applied to the learners only the tasks the textbook included.

9.6.7. Overview

This section described observational data relating mainly to the cognitive content of Greek primary teachers' assessments. They seemed to place more emphasis on children's written activities, and the products of their work. In general, they gave priority to their pupils' obtaining the skills of reading, writing and calculating.

All textbook tests, exercises and other sorts of tasks were aimed at evaluating pupils' scholastic attainments. Some of them attempt to assess pupils' abilities in higher level thinking, such as picking up main points of the text, i.e. analysis, filling in omitted words after having read the text, i.e. evaluating their understanding, or even writing a story inspired by the day's lesson, in order to assess children's imagination and creative writing.

But in general, the above data indicated a relative contradiction between the progressive pedagogy declared in the curriculum and teacher's manual and classroom reality. Teachers' practices seemed to be oriented more towards the traditional pedagogy in terms of emphasis on the 3 Rs, whole class teaching, focussing on the product rather the learning processes and to relational than rather

specific learning objectives. Thus, a tendency of conformity seemed to characterise teachers' practice in an attempt to keep a balance between contradictions deriving from the curriculum and the classroom pressures. These raise the question of what eventually dictates teachers' practices: ideology or habit?

The assessment 'language' was reflected through the various written symbols, and verbal and non-verbal comments teachers applied to respond to children's performance or work. This however, raises the question: 'does the assessment language work the way intended?' i.e. how clearly children and parents understand this language.

Another interesting issue refers to teachers vague awareness of the learning objectives. Teachers typically attempted to monitor children's learning but in relation to non-explicit goals.

Two more points emerged from this section. First, the underlying teachers' goal to control all the time children's knowledge, speech and behaviour. Second, there became evident the different patterns (assessment styles) of assessment activities that different groups of teachers followed (chapter 10).

Overall, these data indicated that typically observed teachers assessed rather informally, spontaneously and intuitively, using various sources for their decisions, being flexible considering the particular circumstances.

It also appeared that many of the observed teachers seemed to be more interested in the pupils' academic progress. However, the vast majority were concerned about skills, behaviour, discipline, attitudes, effort and similar non-cognitive attributes. The next section examines such non-cognitive features that teachers were assessing.

9.6.8. ASSESSING NON-COGNITIVE FEATURES

Introduction

The term 'non-cognitive assessments' is used in this thesis to indicate processes that observed teachers were applying for gathering information and evaluating pupils which are not directly associated with children's academic progress. It was found that most of the teachers were often unaware that they constantly collect and use such information from and for the children, when deciding about them during the daily teaching routine. Teachers' instant responses when they were asked by the researcher "which pupil's traits do you assess?", referred mainly to cognitive traits, especially those which the curriculum declares that primary schools should help pupils to develop. However, when teachers were further asked to think about which other pupils' qualities they might take into account when assessing, they responded, implicitly or explicitly, to the effect that they bore seriously in mind other information of a non-cognitive nature (Airasian, 1991) when they make decisions about their pupils, such as attentiveness, effort, cooperation, and their general behaviour at school.

Moreover, teachers mention such features when they were discussing children's progress with parents. There it seemed that teachers put more emphasis on them than on academic attainments, as the following comments, made to parents, indicate:

> Yiannis, is a good boy, I'm pleased with his behaviour and his good manners, he tries hard as well. (T8)

> I'm afraid that Soula is very talkative and careless. You'll have to speak to her about that. She hasn't shown any progress this term. If she takes more care, I'm sure she'll improve, because she is a clever girl. (T10)

Among the many factors which seemed to influence teachers' judgments about pupils' general progress were included the day-to-day performance in class, their social behaviour, their socioeconomic background, their health, their family situation, their attitudes towards their peers, to mention but a few. In other words, typically these teachers seemed to respect the child as a whole personality and applied 'holistic' assessments. The teachers 'commitment' to the children was also reflected in their replies to the questionnaire (chapter 8). All these issues are related to the child centred pedagogy, which the official rhetoric of that time declared. Thus, a combination of cognitive and non-cognitive features together with information about the child's learning procedures seemed to make up the teacher's assessment.

Although few teachers were in a position to describe precisely those non-cognitive objectives all teachers were found to assess them continuously on a daily basis. During informal discussions with the investigator teachers often mentioned that they needed to know, for instance, who needs encouraging to speak in class and who does not; who is interested in language and who in history, whether a child makes effort to learn. Teachers indicated that they build up a stock of information about each pupil's preferences, motivation, values, work habits, self-control, personality and so on, based mainly on their informal observations of the daily interactions with the pupils. It is also interesting, that teachers kept all this information in their head, none was found to keep a written record of such pupils' qualities (Gipps, 1990; Airasian, 1991; Broadfoot et al., 1991; Pollard et al., 1994). This lack of recording is apparently a disadvantage, since all this information could help teachers to make fair judgements, and to provide proper support to individual children according to their needs.

The observer felt that it was indeed difficult to draw a line between those pupil characteristics which teachers attempted to improve and those they did not. They

seemed to attempt developing both pupil's ability and interest in the subject, to judge pupils' social qualities, and to control them at the same time.

In the following sections observed assessments of non-cognitive aspects are presented by allocating them into four broader groups. Firstly, affective qualities, in particular those which are closely associated with the academic pupil's progress; secondly, the ones concerning mainly social behaviours; thirdly, those regarding information for managerial decisions and finally, those subsumed under the psychomotor domain.

9.6.8.1. AFFECTIVE CHARACTERISTICS

This refers to pupils' psychological features which teachers appeared to bear in mind frequently to assist children's learning. Assessing pupils' affective characteristics is not an easy task because they are not readily observable, and sometimes it is difficult even to describe them (Black & Broadfoot, 1982). Nevertheless, classroom observations indicated that teachers assess such attributes as pupils' motivation, interest, preferences, willingness, effort and so on. Teacher 20 provided a simple example:

> I've noticed that some pupils always need my prompting and supervising to start work, while others are very independent. (T20)

It is obvious that when teachers are well aware of their pupils' personal characteristics they are able to help them overcome some learning problems. When teachers know for instance that some pupils are shy they may encourage them to speak in class, since they never raise their hand unless the teacher calls them by name. In one case for example, the teacher asked a shy boy, to write on the board although he had not raised his hand, to prompt him do something.

9.6.8.2. Assessing and fostering children's interests

Since most classroom assessment is carried out through observation and questioning, the teacher is often able to infer what a specific kind of behaviour means for the pupil. It seemed important for some teachers, to consider such non-cognitive information, so that they could try to influence and positively change pupils' attitudes towards particular subjects, for instance, which they may dislike. Teachers typically seemed to try to do this mainly with the basics, maths and language. A girl's opinion gave the children's view:

> Well, I'd like more hours of lessons like art and craft because you're free to speak to the children and do the things you want, not just listen quietly to the teacher.

It is a truism that for particular children some subjects are more attractive than others. Thus, when teachers through diagnostic assessments gather such affective information and are aware of 'who prefers what' among their pupils they may organize their teaching to encourage children's interest in subjects they dislike. In addition, they may notice that children like 'doing things' rather than listening quietly to the teacher delivering the material, as was the norm in observed classes. This is an indication for teachers to modify their teaching approach by involving pupils more frequently in class activities since children appeared to enjoy them better.

Moreover, some teachers appeared to assign grades or marks attempting "to motivate them for higher attainments in future" as teacher 13 explained. For the more able children in particular, to seek higher standards (Rowntree, 1977; Cassotakis, 1981; Fragos, 1986; Satterly, 1989).

Praising children's effort was common in all classes observed. Teachers seemed seriously to appreciate a child's attempts to learn and to work towards the demands

of the subject. Regarding weak pupils in particular, teachers seemed to be more lenient and to place more value on their effort than on those of the pupils regarded as intelligent. Teacher 6 wrote under a weak pupil's arithmetic tasks:

> Stavros, I'm very pleased because you've tried to do all the exercises. I'll give you two points more because of your effort, and I hope next time you'll do more. (T6).

On the other hand, teachers appeared to exert sharp criticism in a few cases of apparently more able but lazy pupils for not attempting to improve their attainments. The comment under one such boy's work was typical:

> Adonis, this work is not up to your standard. Try harder. You have the potential for much better results, as you know from the past.(T19)

These comments point out first, the self-referenced assessments (second phase of the assessment process), and second that these teachers considered children's effort. In another case a seven years old boy of the first year-level, was trying hard every day to write his spelling correctly. Bit by bit he improved his performance dramatically, in terms of his abilities. Eventually on Friday, the teacher asked him to write the day's spellings on the board and when he succeeded the teacher praised him in front of the class and offered him a coin to buy sweets. When next week the researcher revisited that class the teacher (T15), told him that the particular pupil was still continuing his effort and was achieving at a much higher level.

This example indicates the role of extrinsic motivation which for this young age seemed to work effectively (Cassotakis, 1981; Child, 1993; Satterly, 1989).

9.6.9. SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

In addition, findings indicated that most of the teachers were also interested in qualities associated with social outcomes. Honesty, for example, was one of the aspects some teachers appeared to gather information about and to develop in children. Recall for instance the case of the teacher 18 who congratulated in front of the class the boy who told the truth, that he had not written his homework because the previous afternoon he had been playing football. On the contrary, the same teacher strongly criticised another boy who said that he had forgotten his homework book (which later on happened to turn up and prove that the boy had not written his homework). The teacher assessed these incidents against socially acceptable moral criteria, of being honest and truthful. Then he brought both cases in front of the class for 'public consumption', i.e. to socialize the others by following the good example and not telling lies.

Politeness, cooperation, and self-control were also among the social qualities children had to develop if they wish to be acceptable members of the classroom society. Thus, managerial and social, non-cognitive elements seemed to be predominant in the classroom life which teachers consider important and which, accordingly, they constantly monitor and evaluate.

> From their very first days at school we continuously teach the young children good manners and how to respect each other, preparing them for life. (T11)

Leadership was found to be a quality some teachers were interested in when they were assigning group work to their children. Having identified some children with this quality teachers often utilised them by placing them in groups which lack such persons, or by giving to them the main role in various classroom activities.

Trustworthiness is another non-cognitive trait which many teachers, according to their colleague appeared to take into account:

> When I go out of the classroom, I can trust Petros, carry on with his work, but I'm sure Takis will walk around the room and disturb other children. I trust Maria to take home any message from me to her parents, but Adonis might hide it from his parents. (T16)

Other rather covert, social aspects linked with children's academic life which teachers were constantly assessing included carefulness and layout of work. This stems from the socially acceptable appearance of children's belongings and work in the microcosm of the classroom or the school. These are among the elements that structure what Filer (1993) describes as the 'contexts' of assessments. Thus casualness and sloppiness of children's work or lack of attention during instruction, appeared to be of first priority for remediation in observed classrooms. However, the case of the creative writing, as mentioned earlier, is a typical example of the contradictory of many teachers' practice, who found to assess the layout and tidiness of children's work instead the creative ideas within it. Yet, since the Greek primary curriculum is oriented towards the basics it seems natural that teachers typically seemed to place emphasis on the presentational features of pupil's work.

Isolation is another social aspect teachers assessed and then often attempted to minimise. As they remarked they sometimes observe pupils who are very isolated, who even during the break stay in a corner and avoid playing with other children. This kind of behaviour teachers said provides them with cues about the pupils' personality and their general attitudes towards schooling. By getting close to the child teachers said they might find out the reasons for such isolation and also they might find ways to help the pupils become integrated in the group. In other words, teachers can help to socialize the children on the basis of extended observations and assessment of social behaviour.

9.6.9.1. Keeping children's interest in class

All teachers were found constantly to attempt maximizing attention and encouraging pupils' participation. One simple way for teachers to find out if their input messages have been received was to require pupils to participate. Teachers were constantly prompting children to say something, in particular they attempted to encourage the participation of shy or inattentive children. Moreover, participation in classroom activities seemed to be an effective strategy teachers used to control children. Class participation therefore, seems to be a four-fold non-cognitive process. First, each child's participation in a group or class activity seems to be a social and intellectual enterprise. Secondly, when teachers prompted a shy pupil to participate they perhaps attempted to encourage the child, that is to foster an affective quality. Finally, very often teachers used the 'strategy' of class participation in order to keep all the pupils busy, so that they easily control them (Pollard, 1985; Airasian, 1991). In one class the teacher called on a girl to participate in the discussion when he found her being inattentive, looking out of the window.

Many teachers also appeared to seek children's cooperation, either with themselves or with their classmates. Others were interested to see whether children work alone with minimum supervision and do in fact foster such independence for all children, since this is one of the basic aims of the progressive pedagogy (Sharp and Green, 1975; Bennett, 1976; Jasman, 1987).

9.6.9.2. Teachers' expectations

Teachers' assessments which often take place even before they observe and listen to what the children can do in the classroom, is another issue of interest. Teachers often attempted to foresee children's academic future using information regarding their background, or their external appearance, the way children walk or speak.

It could be argued that the way teachers use and reflect on assessment results often depends on their expectations for certain pupils, based on a range of socioeconomic background information about pupil's personal characteristics and previous assessments. Such information often produces a pupil stereotype such as, 'bright', 'stupid' or 'slow learner', which in turn, gradually leads to the child's adopting this label (Rowntree, 1977; Black & Broadfoot, 1982; Pollard, 1985; Satterly, 1989; Airasian, 1991). On the other hand, if assessment results from a given test, for instance, do not match such a teacher's expectations they may reject the results as something which happened by chance (Broadfoot, 1979). It was interesting to hear a teacher's comment on a 'less able' pupil's writing:

> I've surprised with this piece of homework from Kostas. This is very accurate and neat. I'm sure that somebody helped him. His past achievements do not justify this work. (T18)

The same teacher however, looking at the work of a 'more able' girl seemed embarrassed again:

> What is that? I know that Eleni is a good learner. She probably was ill that day, or something else must have happened to her. This is not typical of her. Look here, at her previous pieces of work and you will see the difference. (T18)

When demonstrating a girl's composition to the investigator a teacher at a rural school said:

> This is a model of good work. Dimitra is the priest's daughter, and her parents take a lot of interest in her school progress.. They visit us often and discuss her progress. (T16)

Later, the teacher got a boy's work and said:

> Now look at the difference when you see this boy's work; his father is a fisherman, I've never seen him at school. Look what a mess his son's work is. Of course, I didn't expect anything better. If parents care about their child's progress you can easily see the results. (T16)

Three points emerge here. First, although the teacher assessed children's products evaluated their quality in reference to previous progress. Second, he associated the pupils' progress with their family background, and third, the parents' role in the cooperation with the school. Similar comments were noted following the discussions with teachers in an urban school, who tended to attribute children's achievements to their socioeconomic background (Sharp and Green, 1975; Mavrogiorgos, 1988). Expressing the views of most teachers in the staffroom, a teacher argued:

> From the first minute we see the pupils' appearance, from the way they behave and from their accent, we can tell you which of them will do well at school and which will do badly. (T11)

In fact teachers have many opportunities to pre-evaluate, in a sense, pupils before even seeing them. For instance, when consulting the documents which accompany children from the school's records, there is information about the pupils' families, socioeconomic background, and parents occupations. In the case of children who come from other schools, the records are usually accompanied with academic grades and behavioural profile recorded in their reports (Rowntree, 1977; Airasian, 1991). When briefing a new teacher about a particular class the head teacher commented: "...and you'll have children like Yiorgos in your class, he is a brilliant learner...," but for another child warned: "I'm afraid you'll have many troubles with Stelios".

Such discussions are common in the staffroom when at the end of the school year and before the beginning of the new school year teachers prepare for their teaching activities. Teacher 8 commenting on a new pupil's registration certificate said:

> I'm confident about the future progress of this girl, Sofia, because I've already taught a brother and a sister of hers in earlier years and they were very good. (T11)

It is interesting that even before the children had the opportunity to show their abilities teachers are in a way predisposed for pupils' future progress, (Broadfoot, 1979; Airasian, 1991). This in the long term might have crucial impacts for children's scholastic and affective development.

9.6.10. MANAGERIAL OBJECTIVES

9.6.10.1. Assessing children's behaviour

The presentation turns now to another important sub-category of non-cognitive assessments concerning not so directly the academic progress of children but something more managerial. Frequently teachers' interest focussed on pupils' qualities such as self-control, compliance, conformity, obedience and the like. Note for instance the following typical teachers quotations:

> Panagiotis, because you were rude to Mrs Rosa, the cleaner, this morning I'll not allow you to play football today. (T6)
>
> Children who were fighting during my absence, have to stay in the classroom and do extra work during the break. (T7)

One could infer from such teachers' decisions that they evaluated negatively first, the boy's attitude towards the lady, and second the children's behaviour and interpreted them as misbehaviours. Thus, they responded with withdrawal of the football and the break privileges respectively hoping that pupils would be avoid similar misbehaviours in future (Child, 1986). The public reprimand and the sanctions were deferrents aimed at the other children. Very often it was observed that teacher's assessment reactions were aimed at pupil control:

> I cannot tolerate this whispering, could you two please pay attention to me? (T2)

> I want all of you to look me in the eye.(T7)
>
> Now, I want all of you to gather your things, get into twos and walk to the playground for P.E. Anybody who breaks the line or shouts will not take part in the games afterwards. (T11)

According to the teachers, they make such statements from the first day the children come to school. They make clear to the children the rules of the school and of the class. In some classrooms there was a notice-board displaying in large bold letters a list with the dos and don'ts of the class (Starida, 1990). One teacher explained to the investigator:

> This is our classroom 'Constitution'. Children must respect the classroom's constitution. That's why I've involved them in formulating it together after having discussed every statement, so that they obtain a feeling of 'ownership'. Also they feel more pressure to obey it since it was created with their agreement. (T8)

It is obvious from this extract the teacher's attempt for imposing self-control on pupils, linking it with a feeling of citizenship, as well as an implicit social commitment. At the classroom level nearly all teachers appeared to be very interested in keeping the teaching flowing without long and frequent interruptions. They applied numerous coping strategies (Pollard, 1985) for this purpose like the class participation mentioned earlier. Some teachers attempted to apply democratic principles in practice by negotiating with the children the classroom rules and regulations. In other classrooms, mostly in the lower year-levels, the teachers themselves introduced and explained the classroom rules which the pupils had to obey, as well as the penalties for the law-breakers. Observed teachers strived to maintain a smooth flow of instruction, and they constantly were assessing and monitor pupils' behaviour. Spontaneous assessment expressions such as:

> What have I just said, Katerina?
>
> Order, order.
>
> Class pay attention please.

Walk out of the room quietly one by one

Hands up to speak

Soula, change your seat, away from Maria

and numerous similar expressions seemed to be routine echoes from a Greek primary classroom aiming to control children's knowledge, movement and speech. These follow the first smooth phases of implementing teacher's control which are expressed by teachers' frowning or staring fixedly at a pupil which marks undesirable behaviour. All these teachers' reactions belong to the 3rd phase of managerial assessment process when the assessors having interpreted the evidence as undesirable respond to children's behaviour.

9.6.10.2. Mild sanctions

Experienced teachers applied a great variety of routine overt or covert assessments, responses and remedial measures when they encountered behaviour prejudicial to the smooth flow of teaching. Most of them were the teacher's immediate covert reactions without interrupting the 'flow' of teaching (Airasian, 1991). In that way one teacher used a reproachful glance to check two talkative girls in the rear desks. During reading teacher 10 snapped his fingers to redirect the attention of a boy to the lesson, while continuing to listen and keep an eye on the manual. When two boys were kicking each other under their table the teacher walked towards them in order to signal to them that they had to stop and attend to the lesson. Such non-verbal teacher assessments and responses contain symbolic meanings for the pupils and the teachers use them to control children and to keep the teaching flowing. The term 'assessment sign language' might reflect this non-verbal communication. Changing a pupils' seat was a commonly used strategy to avoid noise in many classrooms, as well. Another strategy for maintaining control was to keep children busy all the time, as was observed in most classrooms. Pupil control on the other hand, is closely associated with the traditional pedagogy, and the class teaching approach.

It seemed that each teacher had absolute autonomy in his/her classroom. Teachers typically, manifested power and authority over pupils' learning, behaviour and speech. They typically curbed children's movement and talk. Typically teachers appeared to control the class; children spoke only with permission, they were not allowed to move in the classroom, or to cooperate with their peers (Makrinioti, 1982; Papastamatis, 1988; Starida, 1990). Pupils were checked for inattention, for violating classroom or school rules, for teasing their peers.

9.6.10.3. Controlling pupils' speech

As far as control of speaking in the classroom is concerned, it was found that typically, the children had to ask for permission to speak, or they had to raise their hand. Correcting, controlling and monitoring children's talk was considered by the teachers as an essential part of their teaching goals.

Typical expressions like the following were the bread and butter of the observed classroom interactions aimed to control children's speech:

> Take your hand away from your mouth and speak up
>
> Could you please stop talking?
>
> Speak one at a time
>
> Don't shout out
>
> Don't Sir/Miss...
>
> Irini, tell us the story we discussed yesterday, in your own words (but when she did, the teacher constantly interrupted, correcting, rephrasing and repeating her phrases).

9.6.10.4. Teaching experience and class control

New teachers appeared to complain about lack of discipline and problems of control although they and their pupils insisted that there was a free and warm progressive climate in their classrooms and they had formed excellent relationships with the children. Their colleagues, however, seemed to be annoyed by those pupils' activities and noise. For the latter teachers, the main complaint from the pupils was

that they were authoritarian with old ideas. Experienced teachers, on the other hand, frequently expressed their fears that the progressive pedagogy with its ideas of treating children as unique personalities and allowing them much freedom and autonomy results in chaos and anarchy. Two young teachers complained that they encountered serious discipline problems with their pupils because they started off being too 'mild' with them:

> Now I have a job to get them to listen to me when I'm teaching, so I often sent some of the boys to the head when I cannot control them. (T5)

9.6.11. PSYCHOMOTOR OBJECTIVES

As was mentioned earlier, teachers' attention focussed also on characteristics associated with the skills pupils are expected to develop during their schooling. For instance, at the reception age-level, teachers were teaching children to manipulate essential schooling tools, such as holding a pencil, using a pair of scissors, using the ruler to draw lines, forming the letters properly, and such-like psychomotor skills. It is obvious then that teachers afterwards observed how well children had mastered these skills, and constantly intervened to assist those children who needed help.

Holding a pencil properly and gradually increasing their writing speed, for instance, are psychomotor skills which children had to master from the first weeks they enter school. The proper manipulation of science equipment becomes an essential skill in higher grades. The subject of Physical Education as well required the mastery of many sporting and athletic skills. Another such example is more representative. In one class the teacher was teaching Greek traditional dances. Here the children had to follow the teachers exact steps, but when they had mastered and controlled it, then they could 'dress' it, expressing their feelings through slightly different movements. All teachers were found to be constantly assessing and monitoring such skills for reasons which are perfectly obvious.

9.7. Teacher assessment competence

The vast majority of the observed teachers stated that they needed some training to assess effectively for the benefit of their teaching and children's learning. Most of them accepted that from experience, during instruction, or by reading relevant books or journals, had learned how to assess. Nearly all said that they had not undertaken any measurement course during their initial training, and from the few who said that they received such a course, they said that they do not use that knowledge when assessing. As a teacher put it: "Frankly, I feel sometimes that I assess imitating my teacher when I was pupil". In another school a teacher commended:

> I think it is unrealistic to implement measurement knowledge acquired during the initial training in the classroom. You have forgotten what you have been taught in college. In the classroom we often assess spontaneously, than by using standardized tests and statistics. I know teachers who had never had any measurement training but they make the right decisions and fair judgements for the kids. (T19)

Overall, observed teachers expressed a demand for INSET on assessing, and help at the school level. These findings are in line with the questionnaire data on the issue.

The next chapter looks at the patterns some groups of teachers replied to particular items of the questionnaire, and examines similar patterns in the observational data.

CHAPTER 10: ASSESSMENT STYLES

Introduction

The questionnaire and the observations have provided a large amount of information about the teachers in the study. This information has been summarised in order to be usefully interpreted. This summary presents average values on each of the variables, such as the categories of the responses to the questionnaire and patterns identified from the observational data. This provides descriptions of the typical teacher. However, it is also interesting to see how far individual teachers (or groups of teachers) depart from these norms.

During the analysis of the questionnaire replies it was noticed that several teachers responded in a rather similar pattern to particular items. Similar patterns of assessment practices were identified during classroom observations. A deeper consideration of these patterns led the researcher to the 'establishment' of two cut-off criteria, according to which and in combination with others, teachers tend to reply and act in a particular direction. The cut-off criteria used were whether marks and homework were regularly given. The selection of these criteria was based primarily on the grounds that both marks and homework had been statutorily abolished several years before this study. Hence, it was of interest to identify the proportion of the teachers who applied the official rules on the specific issue as well as the proportion of those who broke them, also to see the assessment patterns followed and to trace the reasons and possible implications on children's progress. These patterns in this study are called 'assessment styles'.

Eggleston et al. (1986) defined teaching style as a consistent set of tactics which the teachers in their study used. The different assessment patterns of each group define the different assessment style for the present study.

The presentation of the assessment styles here is made in the light of similar studies that report teaching or assessment styles (Bennett, and Jordan, 1975; Bennett, 1976; Galton et al., 1980; McCallum et al., 1993). The main statistical approach used in these studies to reveal particular groups of teachers was cluster analysis. It must be noted however, that the present study had not been designed to be analysed by factor or cluster analysis because data collection was not designed to yield scores, on which such analyses are based. Rather, this study aimed to explore, understand and present the general picture of the assessment enterprise in Greek primary classrooms. It was not intended to reveal styles or typologies of assessments, as other studies have been especially designed to (Bennett and Jordan, 1975; Bennett, 1976; Papastamatis, 1988). That is why the analysis has not gone in to much depth. The grouping became apparent from the data that provide descriptive accounts of classroom assessment practices.

This description of the assessment styles has a value in its own right as bringing out and clarifying how teachers do in fact differ in their assessment approaches. Most of the teachers differed in some respects from the typical profile. Some for instance, gave marks and grades, others rejected this but they regularly gave homework and daily tests to the pupils, and so on.

Why teachers behaved like this and what implications on pupils' development different assessment styles might have, are interesting questions which are discussed later on. This section is related to the main study's questions as presenting evidence of current practice, indicating how big is the gap between it and the desirable (more effective practices as determined by the research evidence) and providing some insights towards improvement.

A tentative description follows of different patterns of teacher assessment which seem to be emerging from the data. The descriptions are based on the variation of replies to the questionnaire and in the different assessment practices observed.

The search on the data eventually revealed four kinds of assessment styles that vary along the dimensions of consistency, systematicity, pedagogy, reasoning, and classroom management. The styles are not hierarchical in value and no particular group of beliefs or approaches is aimed to reflect a desirable style. The styles are not completely distinct. Although many teachers exhibit characteristics of more than one style, an attempt has been made to show how they differ. Observed teachers typical of each style are indicated here with the letter (T), which stands for teacher, plus a number (1-20), since twenty teachers were observed.

10.1. Rule Followers

Assessment in most of its forms: tests, grading, and homework, appears to be discouraged while intrinsic motivation is favoured by teachers of this style. "I want them to enjoy working and completing their tasks".

The most significant characteristic of this group of teachers, who comprise about thirteen per cent of the sample, was the consistency of their tendency to follow closely the government directives prescribed in the curriculum, circulars and the manual. Among the main characteristics of the group were the rejection of homework, and of using marks.

> The children have to finish their work at school, they are entitled to relax at home just like adults. (T1)

They used descriptive assessments instead of marks because:

> Marks have negative effects especially on the weak students, and act as extrinsic motivation (T20).

Another interesting feature of this group is that during teaching they seemed to follow the manual rather mechanically, as though that gave them security. They also felt considerable tacit pressure from the adviser, and the curriculum when assessing. These teachers recorded their assessment results mentally, and filled in the forms for the school records from their memory or reported to parents.

> We know each child very well and we do not need written evidence (T15).

Their assessments are based not only on children's academic achievements, but also on contextual, biographical and social factors. Process is equally important for them as the outcomes of children's efforts.

> When the children learn the proper steps in solving a problem they can apply them to different circumstances. That's why I value the process and the product of their work equally. (T14)

They valued children's efforts and creative ideas.

> We need to constantly reward and reinforce their efforts, to avoid criticising their failures, and to encourage their creativity (T1).

Whole class teaching was their instructional approach, but often they gave individual help to their pupils. They wrote brief, positive, general comments under pupils' work such as "Well done", "That's good", "Keep up the good work", and the like. They allowed some movement and talk to the children. The teachers (1,5,12,14 and 20) described in the observational data seemed to be typical of this group.

10.2. Rule Breakers

The teachers in this group, about nine per cent of the sample, are termed *rule breakers* because they criticise and resist the imposed 'abolition' of assessment as undermining their systematic ways of working.

These teachers are consistent in their replies to the questionnaire and in their assessment practices in the classroom as observations revealed. A key feature of their assessment style was the daily use of marks and the assignment of homework.

> I regularly give marks, first, to make children aware of their place among the others and the value of their work, and second as a regular communication code with parents, because marks are manageable, have been used for many years and parents understand what they mean. (T13).
>
> I give marks as a reward for children's work, and to motivate them for higher attainments (T2).
>
> Homework is an essential part of the lesson. It gives them a chance to deal with the material once more at home and to practise. That is, it helps to consolidate learning (T7).

These teachers view assessment as a means of stimulating constructive competition among the children. They seemed to plan their assessment activities frequently i.e. spelling or maths tests, (though the same for the whole class), and worksheets incorporating them within their teaching. They collect this evidence as a 'proof' to parents, or to the adviser, of what has been done i.e. for accountability rather than for diagnostic purposes. All the observed teachers of this style kept a special note book where they recorded daily brief notes of their pupils' attainments. The outcome of pupils' work was important for them, not the process that had been followed to reach it.

> I can compare the products either with the prescribed outcome or with other children's work. But it is difficult to compare procedures (T13).

They focused on children's academic achievements when assessing, separating them from their attitudes, efforts or the contextual background, and tend to see the child as a "student" to use Berlak and Berlak's (1981) term.

Critical ability, class participation, knowledge, and diligence, were among the main traits they looked for but not creativity. As for their 'rule-followers' colleagues, whole class teaching was their instructional approach.

Classroom control appeared to be tight and they curbed movement and talk. Their classrooms were tidy, with minimum decoration on the walls, usually teacher-made. Children had to go in and out of the classroom quietly in twos. Reading, writing and number work were the focus of their teaching. Most questioning, oral or written, was of a closed type. When the observer checked children's 'creative writing' books, most corrections related to spelling and syntax, not to creative ideas, fluency of vocabulary, or imagination.

They tended to place more emphasis on rote learning and less emphasis on children's acquisition of understanding of principles and concepts. Overall, they were more concerned to achieve pupil conformity to the teacher's dictates.

Overall, their assessments were rather systematic, conscious and summative in nature for accountability purposes and for improving the basics. Most of the characteristics of this group remind one of what many, such as Bennett (1976), have described as formal teachers. Observed teachers (T2, T7, T13) appeared to have most of the features of this style.

10.3. Style Changers

Inconsistency of views and practices of these teachers concerning classroom assessment is the point which separates them from the other two groups. They

comprise about 78% of the sample. Obviously some of the decisions which these teachers make in the classroom are taken on the spur of the moment, without conscious thought (Galton et al., 1980) but others are the result of rational planning.

These teachers asserted that they followed the manual, the curriculum and the official assessment policy. However, when one considers how they answer on different items, a considerable inconsistency often becomes apparent. Although for instance, many of them stated that they follow the statutory policy in not assigning marks, in fostering creativity and the like; when they answer items with a similar import they tend to provide rather contradictory replies. It was found for instance, that they assess children's diligence and obedience, concurrently with independence and creativity.

Examination of the questionnaire and the observational data suggests that these teachers appeared to be shifting from one style to another over time. Hence, the label *style changers* seems to reflect their assessments. One of the main characteristics of this group was their rejection of systematic recording of their assessment results; they relied on memory.

They combined whole-class teaching with some individualized work. Typically, freedom of movement and talk during teaching were restricted. They seemed to assess formatively and summatively through a combination of observation, questioning, and examination of classwork.

They also expressed the view that systematic assessment threatens their good relationships with the children. Associated with this was the relatively much quieter noise level in the rule breakers' classrooms and by contrast, the warmer pupil/teacher relations in the case of 'changers'. Whereas the rule breakers seemed

to control the class easily and effectively this was less true for the changers and the rule followers.

Written comments on children's work typically were short, positive and general. Most of these teachers seemed to adopt a long-term perspective, a responsibility for seeing their pupils acquire certain permanent skills and features that would have an effect on the kind of adults they would become. Thus, they stressed such objectives as stimulating learning and the development of the pupil's personality. They asserted that they assess for learning motivation but they also mentioned rewards for children's efforts, accountability and competition.

> We have to reward children's efforts verbally or in other concrete ways, so that they will gradually believe that if they try harder, they can improve their achievements which in the last analysis is the aim of schooling (T17).

'Style Changers' when assessing were relying not only on the intellectual achievements, but also on a general knowledge of pupils derived from spending such a long time with them. "We have to bear in mind contextual and biographical aspects to make fair assessments" (Pollard, 1990; Filer, 1993). They tended to value social and emotional aims, emphasising the importance of self-expression and enjoyment of school. When recording they counted children's attitudes, behaviour and efforts.

> When a pupil had really tried hard and put a lot of effort in his work, I can't give him a D, even if the outcome merits a D (T10).

Overall, their teaching approaches were didactic, and their assessment was characterised by improvisation and informality (Broadfoot et al., 1993).

Certain features of this large group are also associated with one or the other groups. The way members of this group change differs, and two main sub-groups of style changers were identified, distinguished by the reasoning they provided for their actions.

10.4. Pragmatists

The first sub-group showed adequate confidence and rationalised all their actions by attributing them to the pragmatic conditions and constraints of their work such as size and quality of class, shortage of resources, time, etc. In the questionnaire they indicated an overall progressive view on teaching, learning and the curriculum. The same flavour characterised their views during the informal discussions they had with the investigator. However, classroom observations showed rather traditional practices. For instance there was a tendency to use at times marks and grades, or to give homework, to conduct whole class teaching, to restrict children's movement and talk, to ask closed questions, accepting only one correct answer, and the like.

Regarding recording they recorded mentally. However, they gave reasons such as:

> It's impossible to note down the numerous assessments that occur during the lesson, given the complexity of teaching, and the problems of knowing what counts as assessment(T9).

> We don't know what to record out of all the vast amount of information and all the ways of doing it. I can't teach and assess concurrently (T4).

Regarding giving homework one of them said: "I avoid giving it regularly because of the large class size; I have no time to check it". On another occasion when such teachers gave homework they justified it by appealing to the pupils' lack of time to finish their work at school.

Though inconsistent in their decisions, they justified them by attributing their practices to the real classroom circumstances and constraints. That is why the label

pragmatists might express the attitudes of this group. Nearly 57% of the teachers appeared to behave that way. Teachers (4,6,8,9,17,18,19) observed in the classroom, seemed to be typical of this style.

10.5. Improvisers

The other sub group of the style changers, accounting for about twenty one per cent of the sample, were teachers who not only were inconsistent in their assessment approaches and views, and apparently less confident regarding their assessments, but who also often seemed unable to justify their actions. They couldn't articulate (McCallum et al., 1993) with any precision their assessment practices. Teachers of this group didn't reply at all to certain questionnaire items.

They did not plan the assessment activities, but relied on assessment opportunities to emerge within their normal teaching. Another feature of these teachers is that their assessments were summative, rather than formative in nature. "I leave assessing to the end of term when I have to report it".

There was among this group a sense of insecurity often related to lack of assessment competence and school support. Overall, this group shared interests with their 'pragmatist' colleagues in rejecting systematic assessing, recording mentally and assessing intuitively, on the spot. Because most of these teachers gave much freedom of movement and talk to their children, in the end they found themselves complaining about lack of discipline and respect in their classrooms. The term *improvisers* might express their attitudes. Teachers (3,10,11,16) appeared to have most of the improvisers' characteristics.

10.6. Overview

One could take this as an illustration of policy application in practice. In the light of the previous analysis some interesting points can be made. First, it is not

surprising that the changers, the vast majority of teachers, about 78%, represent the typical Greek primary school teacher, because of the highly centralized system, and the common features of teacher education; the use of a single textbook, and teacher manual; and the teaching within a National Curriculum.

Second, it is interesting that both the rule followers and the changers relied on mental recording. Although they appeared well aware of the child-centred principles, their practices indicated a somewhat contrasting pedagogy. Thus, in order to understand these teachers' actions and views the reader needs to bear in mind the wider context of the Greek culture, the curriculum, the recent reforms, the frequent changes of the assessment system, teacher training (chapter 6), and the school constraints.

Third, the rule followers attempted to apply the progressive rhetoric, by following the letter of the manual, the curriculum and the directives. They felt the adviser's influence, and considered contextual aspects when assessing. However, they couldn't escape the restrictions of the class-size, shortage of teaching time (8.30 - 13.00) and resources, which resulted in whole class teaching, and a didactic pedagogy.

Fourth, the case of the rule breakers is interesting, because they resisted the official directives, by regularly giving homework and grading. They also seemed confident, asserting that their theories of learning and teaching were effective in improving academic attainments and children's systematic work habits.

The attitudes of changers are of a special interest. One could attribute them among others to the frequent changes of the assessment system imposed during the decade before this study (chapter 6), or to a lack of understanding of the assessment process and potential.

Among the factors that influence teachers' assessments and produce the different styles one could include: the different cycles of fashion in initial teacher training colleges during different periods (Galton et al., 1980); contemporary debate on education (NEA, 1986; Rizospastis, 1987; Bouzakis, 1988; Mavrogiorgos, 1988; Avdali, 1989; Mylonas, 1993); teachers' own experience; school tradition, particular circumstances and constraints; class quality, and so forth.

In general, these styles tend to reflect different philosophies about teaching and learning, and different reactions to the official assessment directives. This is in line with what research (Bennett, 1976; Papastamatis, 1988; McCallum et al., 1993) suggests.

Overall, these findings suggest that typically, improvisation and informality (Bottin, 1991) of assessment practices are the main features of the teachers in the study. The different assessment styles apparent here have similarities with models/styles of teaching or assessing revealed in other studies (Bennett, 1976; Galton et al., 1980; McCallum et al., 1993). However, a naive comparison between the findings of the above studies and those of the present study is not justified because of the very different conditions prevailing where the studies had been carried out, as well as the different aims, the different directives, the differencies in teacher training, the curricula and classroom organisation. Obviously, some processes and constraints that teachers encounter are universal.

Eventually, in the course of the analysis some interesting open-ended questions for further research emerged. First, there is the methodological one, how may one establish cut-off criteria to distinguish such groups? Since all teachers belong to the sample group they do similar things but they also apply some unique practices - i.e. these groups overlap in some aspects. Second, which factors account for the

inconsistency in the main group's replies? What is the relationship between theory and practice? What implications have all these on children's learning? What are the teaching and learning theories on which different groups based their assessment style? Why did the so called 'rule breakers' insist on their assessment practices? Third, should policy-makers bear in mind the existence of such subgroups of teachers and hence should they adapt the proposed innovations accordingly? Should they wait for some time until the full implementation of innovations is achieved? Which is the most effective and economic way to establish new policies? Should policy-makers study classroom practices as a source of effective experience?

The next chapter discusses the significance of the study.

CHAPTER 11: DISCUSSION

Introduction

This section aims to appraise the extent to which the present study has succeeded in arguing that classroom assessment is a powerful tool for promoting teaching and learning, but the Greek primary school teachers of this study seemed to have limited knowledge of its potential. The discussion will seek to meet the aims initially stated in the introduction i.e. it attempts to answer the study's questions and to evaluate, after the main body of the study has been presented, the extent to which the study has in fact attained its objective, to contribute towards the exploration of classroom assessment in a typical Greek primary classroom and its implications for teaching and learning. In engaging in this task, the discussion that will follow is divided into four sections. The first summarises the findings, interrelates them with evidence elsewhere, and provides speculative explanations. The second examines how far these findings answered the study's questions, and the third notes new questions that have emerged. The final section makes suggestions for improvement. The features peculiar to the Greek context (chapter 6), frequently noted before, must be borne in mind throughout this section.

11.1. WHY TEACHERS ASSESS?

In general, the findings of this study indicate that teachers assessed in order to fulfil, intellectual, psychological, managerial and social purposes.

11.1.1. INTELLECTUAL PURPOSES

The use of assessment information to promote learning appeared to be the primary broad intention of all teachers. It seemed to come into being in different ways, and to be determined by various interrelated factors and actions.

The nature of their assessments was, on the whole, formative. Classroom observations revealed that teachers typically were constantly assessing their pupils to see to what extent they had mastered and accumulated the prerequisite knowledge and skills. Evidence from England and Wales combined with some from Canada, Australia and the USA (Pollard et al., 1994; Bachor and Anderson 1994; Fennesy, 1982; Airasian, 1991) indicates that this is always the main concern of primary school teachers.

11.1.1.1. Diagnosis

The very important purpose of classroom assessment, that of diagnosing both formally and informally children's learning levels, and emotional or social problems, as well as teaching deficiencies, was mentioned frequently in the questionnaire and noticed very often during observations. Teachers typically gathered diagnostic information academic, affective, social, and managerial. Similar insights stem from many studies regarding the diagnostic function of assessment (Morrison, 1974; Rowntree, 1977; Black & Broadfoot, 1982; Satterly, 1989; Airasian 1991).

11.1.1.2. Feedback to the pupil

Many teachers said in the questionnaire that they provided feedback to their pupils about their results and on where, what and how to improve their performance. This is a fundamental principle of the child-centred pedagogy. However, the form of the feedback was by and large some brief comments often accompanied by a mark or a grade. Research suggests (Crooks, 1988; Sadler, 1989; Shipman, 1983; Broadfoot, 1979) that for feedback to be beneficial for the child, it must be immediate and specific. However, perhaps class size, shortage of teaching time, and ignorance of its potential impeded this kind of feedback. Pupils did seem to get this from their teacher's verbal or non-verbal reactions to their performance or behaviour. The

importance of the issue is obvious and it also acts as a motivation for further learning (Rowntree, 1977; Sutton, 1985; Jones & Bray, 1986; Dimitropoulos, 1989; Cassotakis, 1981; Sadler 1989; Thomas 1990; Airasian, 1991; Gipps, 1990; Broadfoot et al., 1991; Crooks 1988).

11.1.1.3. Feedback to the teacher

An important function of classroom assessment which was mentioned as the modal one in the questionnaire was the provision of feedback to the teacher as to whether the learning objectives have been reached, about how well they had taught, in order to plan their next teaching, and apply remedial activities. Many studies report similar findings (Sutton, 1985; Jones & Bray 1986; Dimitropoulos, 1989; Cassotakis, 1981; Wilson 1989; Airasian, 1991; Gipps, 1990; Rowntree, 1991).

Observational findings indicated that teachers gained constant feedback from the children, though not explicitly, by observing their reactions, their body language, their participation and involvement in the lesson, and by reading "the light in their eyes" (Shipman, 1983) as well as by listening to what they said (Clark and Peterson, 1976; Harlen, 1978).

11.1.1.4. Parents communication

Another purpose which was mentioned by nearly all observed teachers (but by a smaller proportion in the questionnaire) was to communicate information to parents both for accountability and to assist children's learning.

Like their Greek counterparts, French teachers felt more accountable to the Ministry of Education than to parents, to whom English teachers felt more accountable, as a comparative study by (Broadfoot et al., 1993) reports. This similarity is due perhaps to the fact that both the French and the Greek systems are highly centralised.

11.1.2. PSYCHOLOGICAL PURPOSES

Teachers appeared constantly to try to help pupils, especially the less able ones to build up their self-concept. The fostering of learning motivation as a significant function of assessment was implicitly realised in the classroom through partial aspects of assessment, such as grading, encouraging children's effort, giving achievable targets, making positive comments, giving feedback, individualizing instruction, and considering non-academic achievements. Learning motivation was very frequently indicated within teachers' replies to the questionnaire. Classroom observations showed the beneficial function of praise and rewards, for the younger children in particular. Many studies stress the importance teachers place on learning motivation (Rowntree, 1977; Fragos, 1977; Broadfoot 1979, 1984; Harris, and Bell, 1986; Jones & Bray, 1986; Crooks, 1988; Satterly, 1989; Dimitropoulos, 1989; Airasian, 1991; Gipps, 1991).

11.1.2.1. Undesirable side effects of assessment

The proper use of classroom assessment can maximally assist teaching and learning. However, sometimes assessment could result in demotivating, frustrating and disappointing children, particularly the less able, and in a consequent deterioration of child/teacher relationships, as well as in misunderstanding between teachers and parents. Classroom observations present illustrative examples of such side-effects (chapter 8). This might be due to teachers' ignorance of the potential of assessment and alternative practices; because they use it for wrong purposes; or because of other constraints such as time, size or quality of class, lack of training etc. The importance of the issue is stressed in several studies (Glaser 1971; Gronlund et al., 1978; Broadfoot, 1979; Papas, 1980; Harris & Bell 1986; Markantonis and Cassotakis 1989; Bouzakis, 1989; Satterly, 1989). Observations also pointed out many cases of teachers who attempted to be 'objective' and assigned only marks or grades to the children. This however resulted in disappointing the weak children

who tend to experience constant failure. Obviously, not all assessment purposes are compatible.

Observations revealed children's views and the variance in significance of the effects of different forms of assessment. This places a great onus on teachers to guard against undesirable side effects.

11.1.3. SOCIAL PURPOSES

Since children are in a social group such as the class, it is obvious that they are in a constant natural process of socialisation. The teachers' role becomes very important since they have to teach these children the approved ways of living in a new social environment with others, to encourage them in expressing their views confidently and so on. Another dimension of the social purposes of assessment emerged from the views of the majority of the teachers who claimed that when they assess they bear in mind children's socioeconomical background and living conditions (holistic assessments) (Mavrogiorgos, 1988; Airasian, 1991). Thus, their attitude reflected an ideology of compensation (Sharp and Green, 1975) in relation to deprivation. Observations revealed as well the gap between the policy and the practice expressed in Government rhetoric, i.e. that children have to be assessed against a criterion, test, textbook tasks, instead of being compared one with another. However, in most classrooms there was an evident tendency to use assessment to compare individuals, to reward higher achievements, and to criticise low ones. Similar findings emerge from Greek classrooms reports (Nomikou, 1987; Papastamatis, 1988), confirming what (Crooks, 1988; Satterly, 1989) point out.

Teaching style and the pedagogy deriving from the educational policy, may also influence considerably such socialization. For instance, cooperative teaching

organisation, and criterion-referenced assessments seemed to foster good relationships among children. Norm-referenced assessments and frequent competition on the other hand, seemed to damage the children's natural friendliness and in general resulted in more individualistic behaviour.

11.1.4. MANAGERIAL PURPOSES

Classroom observations revealed that teachers, often unawares, continuously attempted to control children's learning, knowledge, speech, and behaviour, by criticising undesirable and praising desirable performances, expressions and attitudes. Frequently the teachers' interest focussed on pupils' qualities such as self-control, compliance, conformity, obedience and the like. All teachers attempted to maintain a smooth flow of instruction, and they were constantly assessing and monitoring pupils' behaviour (Black and Broadfoot, 1982; Starida, 1990; Airasian, 1991). Experienced teachers applied a variety of routine overt or covert assessments, responses and remedial measures when they encountered behaviour prejudicial to the smooth flow of teaching (Airasian, 1991). Very often experienced teachers used the 'strategy' of class participation in order to keep all the pupils busy, for the sake of easy control. New teachers show more concern with classroom behaviour and older teachers with attainment.

A teacher-centred pedagogy was reflected by the absolute teacher control which seemed to permeate the observed classes. A similar atmosphere in Greek primary classrooms has been reported in other studies (Makrinioti, 1982; Nomikou, 1987; Papastamatis, 1988). Pupil control is closely associated with traditional pedagogy, and whole -class teaching.

However, none of the observed teachers actually said that they assess to control and very few teachers mentioned it in the questionnaire, perhaps because they do this

tacitly. Cameron-Jones and Morrison (1973) also report that few teachers in their study mentioned managerial and social aspects. Management routines, 'coping strategies' (Pollard, 1985) play a very large part in teachers' classroom behaviour as (Doyle 1986; Broadfoot, 1979; 1984, 1990; Kyriacou, 1986; Fontana, 1986; Airasian, 1991; Mavrogiorgos, 1992) report.

11.1.5. PSYCHOMOTOR PURPOSES

Teachers' attention focussed also on characteristics associated with the skills pupils are expected to develop during their schooling. Teachers afterwards observed how well children had mastered these skills, and constantly intervened to assist those children who needed help.

11.2. HOW CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT WAS REALISED

11.2.1. First phase: Evidence collection

The vast majority of the questionnaire respondents said that they plan their assessments fairly often. However, observations found only three teachers to plan in writing (Rowntree, 1991). The respondents used a wide variety of assessment activities in the classroom, with the pattern varying at different age-levels and in different subject areas. These activities included oral questioning; class or individual discussions; informal observation, commenting on or marking children's performance, work, behaviour, and interaction with the teacher or peers; and a variety of written exercises, such as worksheets, assignments, text-embeded tasks, and teacher-made tests. Many studies report similar practices of teachers in early school years, (Morrison, 1974; Rowntree, 1977; Fennesy, 1982; Shipman, 1983; Gullickson, 1985; Stiggins & Bridgeford, 1985; Satterly, 1989; McCallum et al, 1993; Mitchell & Koshy, 1993; Bachor and Anderson, 1994).

Field work revealed that unstructured observation was the most widely used way for teachers to collect information about children's academic, behavioural and social characteristics. Nevertheless, when asked, teachers rarely mentioned observation among their approaches for collecting assessment evidence. Similarly, a small proportion (12%) mentioned this approach in the questionnaire.

This raises the question: Why did teachers not mention this widely used evidence collection approach?. One explanation might be that they did not realise that observation is an evidence collection approach, i.e. problem in definition; another that it was self-evident that teachers observe children all the time, or that teachers thought only about formal approaches such as tests, questions, tasks etc. Here emerges the need for teachers to develop an awareness of such tacit approaches.

Continuous observation is reported as the main assessment evidence collection approach in primary schools as research from many countries confirms, such as (Salmon-Cox, 1981, 1982; Dorr-Bremme and Herman 1986; Kellaghan, Madaus, & Airasian, 1982) from the USA; (Council of Europe, 1989), from Europe; (Bachor and Anderson, 1994) from Canada; (Pollard et al., 1994) from England and Wales.

Most of the verbal assessments were made through closed and low-level oral questions, of both a cognitive and non-cognitive nature, to manage and to impose their authority in class and to maintain order, i.e. questioning was used as a power strategy. Oral questioning was the modal assessment approach according to the questionnaire data, as well. Bateson (1990) found that oral measurement devices decline in use as students progress through the school.

More than half of the observed teachers quite regularly constructed simple exercises, worksheets and similar material. This was indicated by 76% of the questionnaire sample. The need to adapt the tests in the individual class circumstances and the preservation of autonomy seemed to be compelling reasons for teachers' reliance on their own tests. Research evidence shows that teachers do not trust assessment instruments provided by external bodies (Wahlstrom & Danley, 1976; Dorr-Bremme, 1983; Bateson, 1990; McCallum et al., 1993).

Sometimes pupils were found to exchange workbooks and correct each other's mistakes, and to evaluate others' work, either when presenting their work in front of the class, or by displaying their work on the class-notice board. However, children usually expressed criticism of their classmates' performance or behaviour. Less able pupils disliked such peer assessments, while the more able were keen on it. Constructively appraising the work of peers is already an established practice in some subjects and fields as research reports (Pianko, & Radzik, 1980; Chater, 1984; Harris, & Bell, 1986; Sadler, 1989).

According to the official guide-lines, correction of children's work had to be carried out by the teacher going to individual pupils at their desks while they work, and by explaining to them their mistakes *sotto voce*. However, observations revealed that the correction was done by and large, on the teacher's desk in the child's absence.

Some research reports collaborative assessment in primary classrooms which actually does provide valuable feedback to the pupil, and involves discussion and negotiation between teacher and pupil about assessment criteria, methods and grading (Harris, & Bell, 1986; Broadfoot & Osborn, 1987; Pollard et al., 1994).

Textbook tasks were the same for all the class and for the same age-level countrywide. However, there was no provision for pupils with different abilities. Several teachers said that they were flexible towards less able children (Sharp and Green, 1975) and they allowed them to complete as many tasks as they could.

Seventeen teachers out of twenty were found to give homework on a regular basis. This is in line with questionnaire findings (89%), but contravenes the Government directives.

Two important issues emerge here. First, the degree of disagreement between policy and practice; and second, the inability of the system to police its policies (Broadfoot et al., 1993). Homework and classwork are both pieces of evidence for assessment and often reflect the teacher's response, and measures for improvement. Homework also provides feedback through teachers' written comments.

The large majority of teachers said in the questionnaire that they check children's homework daily, or quite often. However, during observations and after reviewing children's notebooks the investigator found that about 40% of the teachers did not check pupils' written work regularly. Teachers justified this on the grounds of lack of time and class size. Moreover, pupils complained that they needed their work to be checked, to know whether it was correct or not, and how to improve it.

Overall, classroom observations confirmed what Dorr-Bremme (1983) reports from the USA, that teachers' decision making about which particular techniques to employ is routinely a practical matter, not a "scientific" or technical one.

11.2.2. Second Phase: Evidence Interpretation

During the second phase of their assessments teachers interpreted the information they had collected, with reference mainly to three general standards. Namely, criterion-referenced, norm-referenced, or self-referenced.

11.2.2.1. Criterion Referenced Assessments

Textbook tasks, teacher-made tests, revision papers and similar devices were often used in classes as academic criteria against which children had to work. In theory that was an effective way to avoid the undesirable side effects of competition since the pupils were assessed on the basis of their own work, independent of the work of others (Ebel and Frisbie, 1986; Hills, 1981; Nitko, 1983). However, there was no provision of differentiated (Gipps, 1990) tasks according to children's individual abilities.

Research makes it very clear that the performance standards that are used in criterion-referenced assessments should be reasonable given the ability of the class and the nature of the subject matter; they should also challenge the pupils (Broadfoot, 1979; Hills, 1981; Broadfoot & Osborn, 1987; Crooks, 1988; Gipps, 1990).

Although it seemed that children were assessed against national standards of prescribed objectives, there appeared to be a lack of specific written reference criteria of acceptable levels of mastery or of the lower acceptable level of attainment against which the lesson's objectives might be attained. Teachers underlined this lack by saying that often they had no clear idea of the criteria by which they assess, or cannot easily spell them out.

11.2.2.2. Stating standards of work quality

Teachers claimed in the questionnaire a fairly frequent communication of standards to their children, although observational data contradicted this. Discussions with teachers revealed that they only had a vague idea of the characteristics that comprise a good or poor piece of children's work. Typically, pupils had to work on a task rather mechanically in order to complete it without a clear idea of what counted as a good standard. However, pupils expressed a strong wish (chapter 9) to be informed of the standards of a piece of work which their teacher asked them to accomplish. The likely consequences of such an omission are obvious.

Stiggins and Bridgeford (1985) found that as students progress through the school so does the tendency for teachers to write down the criteria and inform students of them. They also report that in at least a third of the structured performance assessments conducted by their sample teachers, pupils were not informed of performance criteria, scoring procedures were not planned in advance, and levels of performance were not defined before rating. Research suggests that the performance standards should be defined before assessment is carried out (Shipman, 1983; Sadler, 1989; Airasian, 1991).

11.2.2.3. Norm Referenced Assessments

Observations showed that nearly all the teachers by frequent praising and encouraging good performance or work of individual pupils, were on the one hand deliberately encouraging children for learning, but on the other hand, perhaps unintentionally, fostering competitive trends within the class. Moreover, such practices were in conflict with the official education declarations for equality and commonality, since there was no provision for those with lower abilities; these pupils had to compete with their peers for the same objectives, working on the same tasks (which were also criterion-referenced). Observed teachers rarely organised their teaching by grouping children for work. The common approach was for

pupils to work individually, without speaking or assisting each other. Comparison between children was often found to be an underlying classroom goal, although official guide-lines advised teachers to avoid this and to encourage cooperation.

Two issues arise from these views. First, the constraints and dilemmas teachers face (Berlak and Berlak, 1981; Nias, 1989), the side effects of assessment, hence the need for teachers to be aware of them; and second, the question of harmonising policy and practice.

Research indicates that most classroom assessments tend to be referenced against norms of performance of the class as a whole, though are often of little use in improving learning (Cassotakis, 1981; Shipman, 1983; Satterly, 1989; Airasian, 1991).

The comparison which was used to assign grades to pupils often influenced the effort and attitude of them (Child, 1993; Rowntree, 1977; Mavrogiorgos, 1988). Many studies examine the undesirable side-effects of norm referenced approaches such as the severe impacts on children's motivation and self-esteem, and the undermining of the less able children's learning and effort. In these circumstances pupils become more anxious, they think less well of themselves and of their work, they have less friendly relations with their peers, reduce cooperation and interdependence in study (Drever, 1978; Deutsch, 1979; Ebel and Frisbie, 1986; Broadfoot 1987a; Crooks, 1988).

11.2.2.4. Ipsative Assessments

Sometimes observed teachers considered the pupil's own past progress as a point of reference and 'interpreted' the evidence of the new work against it. A child was reported as better or worse than before (Shipman, 1983; Satterly, 1989). They aimed to help individual pupils understand the difference between their present and past achievements, to see their weaknesses, to be encouraged, and finally to become

aware of what they need to improve. This approach, avoids competition between children, with its bad side effects. However, lack of time and the class size prohibited its frequent use. A small proportion of teachers mentioned self-referenced assessments in the questionnaire as well.

Crooks (1988) argues that if pupil's programmes of work are more individualized, and the emphasis in assessment is placed on each pupil's progress in learning, competitiveness is minimized. Under these circumstances, pupils are more willing to help each other.

11.2.3. Third phase: Teacher Responses

Classroom observations traced numerous non-verbal teacher responses ranging from a glance and frowning to a nod or just moving a finger. Body language seemed to play an important role either by conveying evidence to the teacher from children's reactions or vice versa, when the teacher responded to them.

11.2.3.1. Teacher written and oral comments

Typically, teachers' oral comments were positive regarding academic aspects with the aim of encouraging children's learning effort, and negative when referring to behavioural aspects, aiming to maintain order and to avoid disruptiveness or repetition of undesirable actions.

The quality of teacher oral or written comments on children's performance or work, seemed to have palpable effects on children. Specific comments, as most children said, seemed to provide them with beneficial feedback about where they went wrong, and encouraged them to improve. Typically however, teachers' comments were frequently general and short. Most of the pupils had a vague idea of what their teacher's general comments meant. Their teachers however thought that their general comments or symbols conveyed the message they attached to them, namely,

a correct, good piece of work. About 53% of the questionnaire respondents said that they apply short and general comments.

Grades and short comments appeared to be the typical written responses on pupils' work. The broad use of grades is a notable and a rather unexpected finding, since grades had been statutorily discontinued long before the data collection for this study. This raises the question of how far policy is implemented. Perhaps 'pragmatic' constraints of time and class size force the majority of teachers to use short comments. In addition, they may have used grades because they believed that children and parents understand them, since they were in use for a long time before. Also of interest is the variety of the codes of the assessment language used which in fact reflects the various functions of the underlying issue of teachers' assessment ideology, and raises the issue of how well teachers and pupils communicate through the assessment language. Does the assessment language work in the way intended?

11.2.3.2. Using assessment results

Although most of the teachers said that they used results from their assessments to give individual help to their pupils, less than half of the observed teachers regularly conducted it. Class teaching was the modal approach. Teachers complained that time and class size, prevented them from fully applying it. Broadfoot et al. (1993) also note this unachievable goal imposed on English teachers -that of applying individualized instruction in classes with over 30 pupils.

In every class the immediate use of assessment results to assist learning was assumed by teachers to be valuable. Nearly all teachers said that they also used assessment results to inform parents about their children's progress, i.e. for communication and accountability.

11.2.3.3. Marking and grading

Observed teachers used a variety of marking or grading forms ranging from numerical scales, marks, percentages and fractions, through verbal description of pupils' achievements and letter grades with or without a verbal description. It is interesting that about two thirds of the observed teachers appeared to use such numerical marking all the time. Some teachers expressed conflicting views regarding grading (chapter 9). Parents' influence and aspirations for their children (Sharp and Green, 1975; Makrinioti, 1982; Papastamatis, 1988) were also reflected through children's views.

Most teachers argued that they used grades quite often mainly to motivate and to convey to children and their parents how much progress had been made (see chapter 6). Some advocated description of the children's achievements and individual abilities in line with the ideas of the child centred pedagogy (Sharp and Green, 1975; Jasman, 1987). Others mentioned that grades are useful to inform the next teacher or the next school the child moves to. This obvious teacher uncertainty in using grades might be due to the frequent changes of the grading system (chapter 6) that imposed during the decade before the data collection of the present study (Bouzakis, 1988; Avdali, 1989; Mylonas, 1993).

11.2.4. Recording

Systematic recording of assessment evidence or their results was virtually non existent. The vast majority of teachers kept such information in their heads. Recording of classroom assessment results was typically expressed through a few brief notes, grades or marks, similarly to what (Murphy, 1987) reports. Two studies in England and Wales (McCallum et al., 1993; Pollard et al., 1994) found that most of the teachers studied recorded mentally. Reports from the USA (Stiggins and Bridgeford, 1985; Airasian, 1991) also confirm that elementary

teachers rely heavily on mental record-keeping to store and retrieve information on pupils performance.

Only oral reporting took place. The only official school report about their children's progress parents received was the end of the school year promotion certificates from level to level, or the school leaving certificate, which included a general average grade with a description of pupil's achievements, and a word regarding the child's general behaviour during the past school year.

11.3. WHAT TO ASSESS?

11.3.1. Stressing the basics

The importance of the basics to the teachers is reflected through various replies in the questionnaire and by teaching practice. Of course one has to bear in mind that according to the Greek National curriculum for the primary school (chapter 6) the 'core' subjects are given much more time than the others.

Typically, observed teachers appeared to stress children's academic progress and mastery of the basics, and emphasised accumulation of knowledge. In particular, they gave priority to their pupils' obtaining the skills of reading, writing and calculating, they focussed on lower level academic objectives, and were interested in the presentation features of children's work. These findings are similar to the (Broadfoot et al., 1993) report of the French assessment system. Several studies underline this aim of the primary education (Galton et al., 1980; Cassotakis, 1981; Satterly, 1989; Airasian, 1991).

11.3.2. What children's traits do teachers assess?

There is evidence that teachers assess both cognitive and non-academic characteristics - attitudes, and behaviours- (Black & Broadfoot, 1982;

Dimitropoulos, 1989; Airasian, 1991). Most of the 'popular' traits teachers indicated in the questionnaire, such as critical ability, knowledge, creativity, intelligence and imagination (table 13) fall within the 'cognitive' domain. Most of the observed teachers insisted as well that they placed most weight on children's academic achievements when they were assessing. Several studies report that teachers rarely mention other than cognitive characteristic when they asked which children's traits do they evaluate. (Morrison, 1974; Brown and McIntyre, 1977; Hoge & Coladarchi, 1989).

However, from the remaining characteristics of those provided for teachers to choose, (table 13) the 'affective' ones, such as children's effort, independence, industry, attention, co-operation with the teacher and peers, class participation, frankness and self-confidence, eventually took the first place of teachers preference. Regarding the psychomotor domain it seemed that skills, and behaviour were the most important traits included.

Moreover, it was found that teachers observed, evaluated and responded to cues of on-going social behaviour and upon their perceptions of the prevailing personal traits of pupils. All this was done informally, and so much so in fact, that there was little conscious awareness of the process (Morrison & McIntyre, 1973; Broadfoot, 1979; Rowntree, 1991; Airasian, 1991).

Wood and Napthali (1975), found that the teachers in their study preferred to have information mainly about interest, class participation, quietness, confidence, tidiness and behaviour, as well as mathematical ability.

Regarding pedagogy, questionnaire data (table 13) showed that its orientation was traced by the traits critical ability, class participation, industry and knowledge which in total lead to the so called 'traditional' pedagogy (Bennett, 1976; Jasman,

1987). This, as has been said, differs from the official educational philosophy of that time which aspired to be 'progressive', offering more freedom to the learner, fostering creativity and in more respects treating the child as an adult, not as a pupil. Unsurprisingly, as these data showed, such a subject-based Greek National Curriculum with no pupil choice which emphasised the basic skills was more associated with a traditional style of teaching.

These findings are in line with the findings of the ORACLE project (Galton et al., 1980) that is, a progressive primary curriculum as characterised by the Plowden Report (1967), was not much in evidence in the schools studied (after adequate time) between 1975-1980.

Overall, the questionnaire findings of this study indicate that teaching experience, academic qualifications, the particular school's conditions and mainly the child's 'biography' and personality seemed to be among the main factors that determined teachers' attitudes regarding assessment and in part their pedagogy or their ideology. These findings in particular, show that teachers who were at the 'Maraslio' college, those who were young and those with a higher degree, mainly look at children's creativity, co-operation, critical ability, and effort. All these are elements of the so called child-centred, progressive pedagogy. Classroom teachers, those with only the basic teaching degree, and those with more experience, tend to assess children's class participation, knowledge, critical ability and industry, which are elements of a rather traditional pedagogy.

Overall, two main points can be drawn. First, that the teachers studied aimed to promote the basics, and second, that the majority of teachers tended to use a mixed style employing aspects of both traditional and progressive approaches. Other Greek studies (Nomikou, 1987; Papastamatis 1988) report similar findings.

Cameron-Jones and Morrison (1973) found that comprehensive school teachers concentrated on the cognitive aspects i.e. knowledge and comprehension, and to the lesson content. Anderson (1989) reports from Canada that the science teachers of his study placed the emphasis when assigning final grades in this order: knowledge, skills and processes, critical thinking, and student's attitudes.

Moreover, it seemed that typically teachers wanted their pupils to show desirable affective behaviours, which however are thought to be private, idiosyncratic and are difficult to assess (Broadfoot, 1979; Airasian, 1991) with formal approaches. The only example of creative expression was the "creative writing" that in point of fact, teachers typically assessed by looking at spelling, syntax and tidiness rather than children's fluency and original ideas (Broadfoot and Osborn, 1987; Broadfoot et al., 1991).

11.3.3. Teachers' awareness of objectives

Typically, teachers appeared to have a rather vague idea of an improvement towards which they were expecting to urge the majority of their pupils by the end of the lesson. They seemed not to care so much about the lesson's objectives and such like outcomes of instruction, but about the actual lesson's processes such as examining, questioning, listening, demonstrating, giving work, explaining and helping individuals. Overall, observed teachers indicated an uncertainty and ambiguity as far as their awareness of the educational objectives was concerned. It seemed that they intended to monitor learning processes but in relation to non-explicit objectives. These findings are in line with what other studies in Greece report (Markadonis, and Cassotakis, 1979; Cassotakis, 1981), as well as with the insights from the PACE project (Broadfoot, et. al, 1991) and the USA experience (Airasian, 1991). Morrison & McIntyre (1973) argue that much of the difficulty teachers face in assessing arises from their failing to be clear in their own minds about their educational objectives.

11.3.4. Assessment of lower level objectives

Typically teachers attempted to assess the lower levels of Bloom's (1956) educational objectives taxonomy, i.e. they were frequently seeking for knowledge, comprehension and sometimes application of knowledge, as well as task performance, learning, memorisation and thinking. Memorisation appeared to be the main achievement typically sought at all levels. Teachers placed the onus on lower level objectives because it is easier to assess them, or because they believed that children have to concentrate on the basics (Rowntree, 1977; Cassotakis, 1981; Satterly, 1989; Airasian, 1991).

Another aspect associated with assessment was that teachers by and large omitted to state clearly to their pupils before the instruction the objectives of the lesson. Similar findings are reported by Broadfoot (1977). Rowntree, (1991) also stresses the obvious need for the children to be aware of the lesson's objectives.

11.3.5. Process or product?

Most teachers were interested in the outcome of pupils' work. Less frequently they appeared to seek for the way it was produced. According to the official guide-lines teacher had to monitor individual pupils whilst they work to obtain insights into such processes so as to be able to provide immediate feedback, help and remedy. However, the norm was for the teachers to assess pupils' work when they had finished it, so that there was no chance for remedial intervention. They proffered the conventional reason that lack of time and the class size prevented their doing this job properly. Several studies report that most primary teachers focus mainly on outcomes in assessment because they are concrete and often measurable (Satterly, 1989; Cassotakis, 1981; Airasian, 1991).

11.3.6. Differentiation

A very important issue concerning all observed classes was the expectation for all pupils to attain the same objectives regardless of their differences (Gipps, 1990) in ability. Several of these objectives were often unrealisable for the weak pupils, whilst they were excessively unchallenging for the bright ones.

Since Greek classrooms are 'mixed ability' all pupils at the same year-level are confronted with the same body of material and are expected, in theory, to master the same objectives. This reflects the Government rhetoric for provision of equal opportunities for all children, and was an attempt to establish national standards and homogeneity (chapter 6). However, they choose to ignore the fact that children have different individual abilities, and they come from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Studies of French primary education (Broadfoot et al., 1987; 1993; Sharpe, 1992a) report a similar situation there.

Differentiation, by task or graded assessments was a rare approach in classrooms studied, although they have been given particular attention in the literature (Bloom, 1976; Child, 1993; Satterly, 1989; Gipps, 1990).

11.3.7. Axiomatic rather than problematic knowledge

Although the official educational philosophy for primary schooling aimed to help pupils master the necessary processes and skills leading to discovery learning and to gradually become independent learners, in classroom practice this philosophy did not fully materialise. The teacher typically, possessed the knowledge which was transmitted to pupils as a ready-made product, not as a problematic situation. The teacher and the single textbook were the only sources of knowledge. It is apparent the control imposed on both teachers and pupils from the centralised system.

The didactic model was the typical teaching style. Sharpe (1992b) reports very similar findings from French primary classrooms, "Catechistic teaching style". This similarity perhaps is justified because the Greek education system is based on the French patterns and both are highly centralised systems (chapter 6).

11.4. ASSESSING NON-COGNITIVE FEATURES

When first asked most of the observed teachers did not mention that they constantly collect and use non-cognitive information from and for children, when deciding about them during the daily teaching routine. When teachers were further asked they responded, implicitly or explicitly, to the effect that they bore seriously in mind other information of a non-cognitive nature such as attentiveness, effort, cooperation, and general behaviour.

Moreover, teachers mentioned such features when they were discussing children's progress with parents. Among the many factors which seemed to influence teachers' judgments about pupils' general progress were day-to-day performance in class, social behaviour, their socioeconomic background, personality, etc. All these are related to the child centred pedagogy, which the official rhetoric of that time proclaimed (chapter 6). Thus, a combination of cognitive and non-cognitive features together with information about the child's learning procedures seemed to make up the teacher's assessment.

Teachers said that they build up a stock of information about each pupil's preferences, motivation, values, work habits, self-control, personality and so on, based mainly on their informal observations of the daily interactions with the pupils. Anderson & Bachor (1993) and Pollard et al. (1994) report similar findings. It is also interesting that teachers kept all this information in their head, none was found to keep a written record of such pupils' qualities (Gipps, 1990;

Airasian, 1991; Broadfoot et al, 1991; Pollard et al., 1994). They seemed to attempt developing both pupil's ability and interest in the subject, to judge their social qualities, and to control them at the same time.

11.4.1. AFFECTIVE CHARACTERISTICS

Classroom observations indicated that teachers assess such attributes as pupils' motivation, interest, preferences, willingness, effort and so on, in order to help them overcome some learning problems.

It seemed important for some teachers to consider such non-cognitive information, so that they could try to develop pupils' interest in particular subjects, and even to create interest in the case of subjects which were disliked.

Most teachers seemed seriously to appreciate a child's attempts to learn and to work towards the demands of the subject. Learning motivation was the implicit children's quality they attempted to foster.

11.4.2. SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Most of the teachers were also interested in qualities associated with social outcomes which they assessed against socially acceptable moral criteria. Politeness, respect, leadership, co-operation, and self-control were among the social qualities children had to develop if they wished to be acceptable members of the classroom society. Thus, managerial and social, non-cognitive elements seemed to be predominant in the classroom life which teachers considered important and which, accordingly, they constantly monitor and evaluated. Other less prominent, social aspects linked with children's academic life which teachers were constantly assessing included carefulness and layout of work. All these are elements of the

'contexts' of assessments (Filer, 1993). Thus casualness and sloppiness of children's work or lack of attention during instruction, appeared to be of first priority for remediation in observed classrooms. All teachers were found constantly to attempt maximizing attention and encouraging pupils' participation.

11.4.2.1. Teachers' expectations

The way teachers used and reflected on assessment results often depended on their expectations for certain pupils, based on a range of socioeconomic background information about their personal characteristics and previous assessments. Such information often produced a pupil stereotype which in turn gradually led to the child's adopting this label (Rowntree, 1977; Black & Broadfoot, 1982; Pollard, 1985; Satterly, 1989; Airasian, 1991) - the well known "self-fulfilling prophecy" effect.

11.4.3. Pedagogy

The context of the pedagogy according to the present findings and other studies (Makrinioti, 1982; Papastamatis, 1988; Starida, 1990) typically was characterised by the following features.

The predominant teaching approach appeared to be relatively formal, what is called didactic, 'chalk and talk'. The pattern of teacher dominance was notably similar, frontal presentation, closed questioning, listening and writing predominated as the major pupil activities (Papastamatis, 1988; Starida, 1990).

Typically, these teachers were in charge of classroom teaching and solely responsible for children's educational success. That is, they controlled children's learning and behaviour. The majority of teachers combined a heavy emphasis on rote learning with some emphasis on pupils' acquisition of understanding principles and concepts. Moreover, they seemed to be more concerned to achieve pupil

conformity to the teachers' dictates (Starida, 1990). Typically teachers' main aim seemed to be to have all pupils achieve the same basic common standard, pacing the work therefore to conform to that of the middle group. Those children who could proceed faster were unlikely to be permitted to undertake work at a higher level.

An associated feature of the highly directive pedagogy in Greek primary classrooms was that typically their operation was more or less totally dependent on teacher control for maintaining work. The mode was to encourage pupils to work on their own without helping each other.

11.5 CONSTRAINTS IN APPLYING CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT

Overall, teachers said that shortage of time was the major obstacle they faced. 'Insufficient assessment competence' took second place. They also felt some pressure from the curriculum and the school adviser, but not from the headteacher.

Replies to the 'other' categories of restrictions and influences on their assessment decisions (chapter 9) reflected the uncertainty for which they blamed the conflicts produced by frequent changes of the assessment system (chapter 6), the classroom constraints, and their commitment to being fair to the children.

The curriculum the teacher's experience and the pedagogical trends of a given period; (Galton and Simon, 1980); the child's personality, biography and learning context (Filer, 1993; Pollard, 1985); and the circumstances straining in particular schools seemed to place considerable influence on teachers' evaluative decisions.

Typically, these teachers based their judgements more on the children's social and affective background and less on their scholastic achievements and performance (McCallum et al., 1993). It also seems that these teachers typically do not perceive

themselves merely as 'scholastic evaluators' but persons with a much wider social and 'affective' role. Therefore, they placed more weight on such things as attitudes and feelings, and on children's socioeconomic biographies (Pollard, 1985).

These findings are in line with what (Broadfoot et al., 1994) report from their comparative study between French and English primary teachers that both were first and foremost committed to their pupils. For the English in particular, this commitment embraced children's social and emotional development as well as their academic progress on a day-to-day basis.

The tendency for teachers to act independently from administrative factors (head, adviser) or the parents is an indication of concern about professional autonomy. One could say from the latter that teachers' personal ideology (Sharp and Green, 1975; Bennett, 1976; McCallum et al., 1993) is eventually the main factor determining their assessment decisions. These findings also showed that the Government was unable to 'police the implementation' (Broadfoot et al., 1993) of their policies adequately by their agents, here the adviser and the headteacher.

In the light of these findings an interesting question emerges. What implications do these restrictions have on teaching and learning, and what can be done to improve the situation? Solutions to the time question could include extension of teaching time, or providing the teachers with a bank of assessment equipment e.g. tests, check-lists, etc., that are not time consuming to complete.

The other major obstacle, 'insufficient assessment competence', could be reduced by a combination of measures, such as: measurement modules in the initial and in-service training curricula, clear assessment instructions through circulars to the teachers, in-school training, etc.

However, the research evidence persuades the investigator that it is not the 'time' but the difficulty teachers find in understanding and using assessment effectively that is the fundamental obstacle. The solution hence seems to be not simply to give them more time but more training.

11.6. The sources of teachers' competence in assessment

According to the vast majority of the questionnaire respondents and to the statements made by all observed teachers, they rely mainly on their own experience when assessing their pupils. This finding is considered as a significant issue for the study since it might account for practical deficiencies and inconsistencies on their part and also explains some of their views as reflected in other items. The practical message is the need to provide teachers with assessment training, methods and materials.

Since there was not provision of any pattern of assessments it is perhaps not surprising that the study's teachers applied a wide range of practices. These practices reflected their general practice and philosophy of primary education and were related to their teaching and learning perspectives and their response to the imposition of the progressive reforms.

Progressive reforms required teachers to change their current practices. It is unrealistic to expect all teachers to be motivated to change, other than in minimal ways to satisfy statutory requirements, or to act in the same way, even if motivated (McCallum et al., 1993). Thus there were found important differences in the extent of application of their views and practices, between the different teacher groups which are reported in this study as 'assessment styles' (chapter 10).

11.7. Assessment styles

The search on the study's data eventually revealed four kinds of assessment styles that vary along the dimensions of consistency, systematicity, pedagogy, reasoning, and classroom management. These are the 'rule followers', the 'rule breakers', and the 'style changers', the larger group, which is divided in two groups, the 'pragmatists' and the 'improvisers' (chapter 10).

In general, these styles tend to reflect different philosophies about teaching and learning, and different reactions to the official assessment directives. This is in line with other studies (Bennett, 1976; Papastamatis, 1988; McCallum et al., 1993).

Overall, these findings suggest that typically, improvisation and informality (Broadfoot & Osborn, 1987) of assessment practices are the main features of the teachers in the study. The different assessment styles apparent here have similarities with models/styles of teaching or assessing revealed in other studies (Bennett, 1976; Galton et al., 1980; McCallum et al., 1993).

When considering the above different assessment styles some interesting open-ended questions for further research emerge. Which factors account for the inconsistency in the main group's replies? What are the teaching and learning theories on which different groups based their assessment style? Should policy-makers bear in mind the existence of such subgroups of teachers and hence should they adapt the proposed innovations accordingly?

11.8. FINDINGS AND THE STUDY'S QUESTIONS

This section recalls the study's questions separately and explains how the data relate to them.

1. How important is assessment in the classroom?

Its importance was indicated by the wide variety of assessment practices teachers were found to apply; the many functions they indicated that it serves (chapters 8, 9); the frequent changes on assessment policy makers attempted to impose (chapter 6); the benefits or damage it might cause to teaching and learning; its pervasiveness in the classroom; its impacts on children's development; and also the strong resistance of many teachers to applying those forms of it which they thought could put in risk the children's school 'welfare'. Finally, the strong demand from teachers for assessment training and relevant help is another proof of its importance.

All these issues and the extensive literature that deals with them confirm the complexity and the importance of classroom assessment, its potential to assist learning and, obviously, the necessity for teachers to be aware of this potential and the effective practices available.

In addition, international developments in assessments such as the growing dominance of criterion-referenced approaches, and more democratic, participatory assessment practices appear to have convinced policy-makers in many countries (Broadfoot, 1992; Pollard et al., 1994; Stiggins, 1985; Airasian, 1991; Bachor & Anderson, 1994), of the potentially key role that assessment can play as part of the teaching-learning process itself. Thus they have recently shifted their efforts towards alternative formative perspectives and approaches, aiming mainly to assist teaching/learning.

2. Do teachers need to be aware of its potential and of how to apply it effectively?

Assessment is an integral part of the interaction between teacher, pupil and learning materials. Because of this relationship, most teachers were not conscious that what they were doing included assessing but they felt that they needed to add another,

rather formal, task. They thought that assessment was a formal activity, separate from teaching. Several studies report similar findings (Threadfold, 1980; Papas, 1980; Harlen & Qualter, 1991; Pollard et al., 1994). Considering the above, a crucial question emerges: How do teachers develop an awareness of tacit forms of assessment and enhance their effectiveness in the classroom?

Research stresses that teachers need to be clear about why they are assessing and then to find the most appropriate ways to fulfil that purpose (Lee 1989; Sadler, 1989; Satterly, 1989; Glaser, 1990; Sutton, 1990).

3. What evidence have we of teachers' current knowledge and practice about assessment?

Observational data and teachers views indicated that these teachers, as in many other countries, (Papas, 1980; Bottin, 1991; Harlen & Qualter, 1991) were typically not professionally expert in assessment in the sense of understanding how it can most effectively be used and the techniques available.

Several factors may be responsible for this. One is the inadequacy of training in assessment (Mayo 1967,1970; Ward 1980; Newman and Stallings, 1982; Flemming and Chambers 1984). Another could be that teachers usually focus on teaching activities rather than assessment (Airasian, 1991). They see assessment most clearly in its summative form - for selection, certification and accountability. Moreover, teachers may put up resistance to overt forms of assessment because they wanted to 'protect' their pupils (Harlen & Qualter, 1991; Pollard et al., 1994) from anxiety, discrimination, failure and similar undesirable assessment side-effects. It may be due to lack of explicitly formulated objectives, (Pollard et al., 1994). Another reason could be the assumption that assessment issues are the job of others, (officials, LEA, policy makers). All these questions could be interesting topics for future research.

There is evidence that in some countries teachers have been trained to apply assessments systematically, in particular for diagnostic and formative purposes, and that they have improved their skills in observation and curriculum planning (Broadfoot et al., 1991; McCallum et al., 1993; Pollard et al., 1994).

4. How big is the gap between existing knowledge and the desirable (according to the literature) and what problems are caused thereby?

Overall, these findings reveal the unsystematic, inconsistent, intuitive, and subjective, informal approaches of information gathering, used in Greek classrooms, which research criticises because they yield unreliable results.

There is evidence that this is common for teachers in infant and primary schools in many countries (Rowntree, 1977; Jasman, 1987; Broadfoot et al., 1991; Airasian, 1991; Bottin, 1991).

Several scholars criticise the use of informal assessments because they can contribute significantly to the invalidity or unreliability of structured assessment (Gullickson, 1982; Shipman, 1983; Stigginds and Bridgeford, 1985).

However, there seems to have started a shift from the 'strict scientific' quantitative criteria of validity and reliability, which by and large refer to summative evidence collection, to the more formative and qualitative ones, concerning the utility of assessments in facilitating learning considering procedural and contextual aspects (Rowntree, 1977; Boyer, 1987; Nuttall, 1987; Wilson, 1990; Conner et al., 1991; Herman et al., 1992; Filer, 1993).

5. What might be done to reduce the gap and what might be recommended for further research?

In the light of the present findings and the reviewed evidence, it seems that first and foremost teachers need training to become aware of the potential of classroom

assessment and to succeed in doing it effectively. Moreover, it is suggested that processes and instruments that can be completed quickly are urgently required. In order to improve learning motivation, classroom assessment approaches should involve differentiated tasks, clearly articulated criteria, challenging but attainable self-referenced goals, and frequent collection of information on pupils' performance, and personal, encouraging, specific feedback (Broadfoot, 1986; Crooks, 1988; Airasian, 1991).

Teachers need a variety of better devices in order to help their pupils to understand the reasons for their success or failure. There need to be an improvement in the precision of assessment objectives so that pupils and teachers can understand and use them (Pollard et al., 1994). In addition, research on classroom assessment implementation needs to articulate explicitly which of the multiple purposes can be realized by which combinations of practices.

The variety of learning objectives and practical restrictions that occur across age-levels and curricula indicate the necessity for substantially different assessment techniques (Frith and Macintosh, 1984; Stiggins & Bridgeford, 1985). However, as Rowntree (1991) stresses "first and foremost, teachers must apply criteria of educational relevance".

In order to improve the quality of classroom assessment research suggests (Rowntree, 1977; Crooks, 1988; Satterly, 1989; Airasian, 1991; Pollard et al., 1994) that teachers have to avoid prejudicial assessments, repeat observations, plan their assessments, bear in mind the learning context, think in advance about scoring criteria, assess what has been taught, keep written records and compare assessment evidence against other information.

Broadfoot (1986) suggests 'humanizing' the assessment procedure to include not only formal written work but oral and practical work also, and in some cases, personal qualities. Accordingly, assessment would become diagnostic and detailed, increasingly cumulative and integrated with the learning process. An alternative model in this perspective is the one referred to as *Graded assessment* (Pennycuick and Murphy, 1988; Gipps, 1990).

Several scholars (Anderson, 1989; Broadfoot, 1979; Stiggins, 1985; Brown, M. 1991) suggest examining current practice and working out how it may be changed to become more efficient and manifestly more fair.

11.9. CONCLUSION

In order to interpret the findings of the present study the reader has to recall the Greek education context (chapter 6) within which they were developed. Accordingly, policy makers, under the pressure of the teacher Unions and in the light of the international changes in social structures and the education systems, attempted (during the period 1980-1985) to change the traditional Greek pedagogy to a progressive one by the introduction of several reforms. These reforms included new curricula and textbooks, the abolition of formal assessments, examinations and grading, unobstructed promotion from level to level and from primary to secondary school, and the replacement of the inspectorate by 'school advisers' (chapter 6). However, these reforms were introduced without relevant teacher training; without provision for practical help to the teachers overstretched by such constraints as class size, mixed ability classes, lack of resources, lack of relevant training, and half-day teaching. All these, combined with their long experience of traditional teaching approaches, as well as the rather short period (6 years) between the introduction of the above reforms and the data collection of this study, could not fail to cause considerable confusion to the majority of teachers. This uncertainty is well

This uncertainty is well reflected by the inconsistency of their views and practices (Jasman, 1987) which these data report, and the different assessment styles identified (chapter 10). In general, the above data indicated a relative contradiction between the progressive pedagogy proclaimed in the curriculum, and classroom reality. Teachers' practices seemed to be oriented more towards the traditional pedagogy in terms of emphasis on the 3 Rs, whole class teaching, focussing on the product rather than on the learning processes and objectives. In short, a general conformity and conservatism was evident. Unsurprisingly, there is evidence that teachers as a social group strongly resist change (Webb and Ashton, 1987; Broadfoot, 1992). All these raise the question of what eventually drives teachers' practices: ideology or habit?

The inconsistency between belief and performance is a well-known phenomenon with teachers (Ashton, 1981; Brogden, 1983). Yet when it comes to implementing their own statements into practice, they fail to do so because their regular habits in day-to day teaching are stronger than their attitudes (Rogers, 1983). According to Argyris and Schon's (1974) "theory in practice" approach and other change theories (Babad, 1985) exposing this contradiction, can serve as a starting point in changing the teachers' practice and helping them to learn new ways of teaching that will be a closer match with their attitudes (Glaubman, 1990).

The apparent teacher ambiguity of understanding assessment or difficulty in articulating it, and the gap between rhetoric and reality, as the findings of this study revealed, emerge as fundamental issues for investigation and remediation.

Overall, these findings raised new questions such as, which are the best ways of eliciting teachers' assessment practices; how can maximally effective practices be developed and disseminated to the teachers for their use or adaptation; what are the

impacts of teachers' insufficient assessment competence on children's progress; how far is policy implemented in practice and how is it to be controlled?

Another interesting item for future research is a survey of assessment courses provided in initial teacher training institutions in the light of the desiderata considered in this study.

Two compelling needs are underlined by the present study. First, policy makers must consider the evidence of research before imposing innovations which without the proper training and co-operation of classroom teachers are doomed. Second, teachers themselves need to be aware of the potential of classroom assessment and of the need for their professional development in this vital activity. A final question regards why assessment which is such a pervasive and fundamental part of teaching is almost totally overlooked in teacher training. Can it really change?

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APPENDIX 1

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

IOANNIS MAVROMMATIS
RESEARCH STUDENT

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a Greek primary school teacher, and am at present a postgraduate research student at Bristol University. As part of my studies I am carrying out research on *classroom assessment in Greek primary schools.*

I would define classroom assessment as an on going process during which the teacher collects evidence, interprets it against some standards, and makes decisions accordingly.

This research aims: to explore the classroom assessment procedures; to estimate the gap between the current practice and the desirable (according to the literature); to trace the extent to which teachers are aware of classroom assessment's potential to promote teaching and learning; and to make suggestions for improvement.

Your opinion therefore, is very important for the study. Please feel free and answer the following questionnaire. There are no right or wrong answers, as all are useful for the study. *This questionnaire is anonymous and confidential.* The answers will be used only for the purposes of the study.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Yours sincerely

Yiannis Mavrommatis

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please circle the appropriate number

1. Sex

1 Male 2 Female

2. How many years have you been teaching?

1 0-8 3 17-24

2 9-16 4 25-35

3. What sort of area is your school located?

1 Urban

2 Suburban

3 Rural

4 Other

(specify) .....

4. How many pupils are in your class?

1 5-10 4 23-28

2 11-16 5 29-34

3 17-22 6 over 34

5. Which level have you been teaching during the last two years?

1 1-2 3 5-6

2 3-4 4 All levels

6. Academic qualifications (circle all which apply)

1 Basic certificate of education (2 years studies)

2 Postgraduate Certification of ED (eg. Maraslio College)

3 Political Sciences degree

4 Other

Specify .....

7. How often do you plan in writing your assessments?

1 Always 4 Rarely

2 Often 5 Never

3 Sometimes

8. Describe some of your assessment practices

.....

.....

.....

9. What sort of written assessments do you apply on children's work?

1	Numerical	4	Detailed comments
2	Grades (letters)	5	Stars, sketches
3	Short comments	6	Other (specify).....

.....

10. Rank the influence that each of these factors exerts on your assessments, by circling a number on the scale.

		No influence			High influence		
1	Head	0	1	2	3	4	5
2	Adviser	0	1	2	3	4	5
3	Parents	0	1	2	3	4	5
4	Colleagues	0	1	2	3	4	5
5	Curriculum	0	1	2	3	4	5
6	Other (specify below)	0	1	2	3	4	5

.....

.....

11. Do you think assessment helps teaching/learning?

If yes, in what way? If no, why not?

.....

.....

12. How often do you assess each of the following subject?

(Tick one box for each subject)

	1 never	2 rarely	3 sometimes	4 often	5 always	
1						Maths
2						Reading
3						Written work
4						Study of Environment
5						Aesthetics

13. Please circle the number against the five (5) traits you consider as most important, when assessing your pupils.

1	Independence	14	Interest
2	Attendance	15	Knowledge
3	Behaviour	16	Maturity
4	Carefulness	17	Mastery of skills
5	Confidence	18	Obedience
6	Class participation	19	Perseverance
7	Cooperation	20	Politeness
8	Creativity	21	Quietness
9	Critical ability	22	Retention
10	Diligence	23	Self-confidence
11	Effort	24	Imagination
12	Honesty	25	Tidiness
13	Intelligence	26	Other (specify)

14. How often do you give your own tests to the pupils?

1. Daily
2. Often (once a week)
3. Sometimes (once in fortnight)
4. Rarely
5. Never

15. Do you make clear to your pupils in advance the criteria according to which you intend to asses their work?

1 Always 2 Often

3 Sometimes 4 Rarely

5 Never

16. Indicate the factors that restrict your assessments.

1. School adviser
2. Head
3. Demands of other subjects
4. Lack of time
5. My insufficient assessment competence
6. The assessment attitudes of my colleagues
7. Personal reasons (ideology, etc.)
8. Other

(Specify) .....

17. What use do you make with the assessment results?

1. I record and do nothing with them
2. I inform the head and the school records
3. Communicate information to parents
4. I use them to individualize instruction
5. I do not record them at all
6. Other

(specify) .....

18. Do you give any homework?

1 **Yes**. If yes, what sort, and for which purposes?

2 **No**. If no, why not? (please justify)

.....

.....

.....

.....

19. How often do you check pupils' homework?

1	Daily	2	Often
3	Sometimes	4	Rarely
		5	Never

20. Why do you comment on pupils work or performance?

.....

.....

.....

.....

21. How did you learn to assess? (circle all which apply).

1 During my initial teacher training

2 Discussing with my colleagues

3 From experience (without instruction)

4 Other

(specify) .....

.....

22. What would you suggest for the improvement of classroom assessment in order to promote teaching and learning?

.....

.....

.....

.....

23. Any other comments?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please check again to see that you have responded to every item.

ΓΙΑΝΝΗΣ ΜΑΥΡΟΜΜΑΤΗΣ
ΕΡΕΥΝΗΤΗΣ ΦΟΙΤΗΤΗΣ

ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ BRISTOL
ΑΓΓΛΙΑ

Συνάδελφοι,

Είμαι δάσκαλος με αρκετά χρόνια υπηρεσίας. Με υποτροφία του Ιδρύματος Κρατικών Υποτροφιών από το ακαδημαϊκό έτος (1989–90) κάνω μεταπτυχιακές σπουδές στην εκπαιδευτική αξιολόγηση στο Πανεπιστήμιο του Bristol στην Αγγλία.

Μελετώ την καθημερινή αξιολόγηση του μαθητή του Δημοτικού σχολείου στην τάξη. Με τον όρο *αξιολόγηση στην τάξη* εννοώ τις ποικίλες ενέργειες του δασκάλου που περιλαμβάνουν τη συλλογή πληροφοριών για τους μαθητές, τη σύγκρισή τους με κάποια standards, τις μορφές αντίδρασης του δασκάλου στις επιδόσεις των μαθητών, και τη λήψη ανάλογων αποφάσεων με σκοπό τη βελτίωση της διδασκαλίας και μάθησης.

Στόχοι της μελέτης μου είναι:

- Η βαθύτερη κατανόηση του φαινομένου της αξιολόγησης στην τάξη.
- Η αποκάλυψη της δυναμικής της αξιολόγησης για βελτίωση ή παρεμπόδιση της μάθησης (όταν δεν χρησιμοποιείται σωστά).
- Η εκτίμηση της διαφοράς από τις ακολουθούμενες πρακτικές στην ελληνική τάξη, σε σχέση με ότι συνιστούν οι σύγχρονες έρευνες.
- Η επισήμανση των δυσκολιών που αντιμετωπίζουν οι δάσκαλοι.
- Η παρουσίαση προτάσεων για βελτίωση, σύμφωνα με όλα αυτά.

Απάντησε σε παρακαλώ ελεύθερα και ειλικρινά για τις πρακτικές αξιολόγησης που ακολουθείς, και γράψε την άποψή σου στα άλλα ερωτήματα. Δεν υπάρχουν σωστές ή λαθεμένες απαντήσεις. Όλες είναι χρήσιμες για την έρευνα.

Το ερωτηματολογιο αυτό ειναι ανώνυμο και εμπιστευτικό. Οι απαντήσεις θα χρησιμοποιηθούν μόνο για αυτή την έρευνα. Σε ευχαριστώ πολύ για τη βοήθειά σου.

Με εκτίμηση

Γιάννης Μαυρομμάτης

ΕΡΩΤΗΜΑΤΟΛΟΓΙΟ

<u>Απάντησε στις ερωτήσεις κυκλώνοντας ένα αριθμό.</u>

1. Φύλο
   1. Άνδρας 2. Γυναίκα

2. Πόσα χρόνια διδάσκεις;
   1. 0–8 3. 17–24
   2. 9–16 4. 25–35

3. Σε τί είδους σχολείο δίδαξες τα δύο τελευταία χρόνια;
   1. Αστικό 3. Σε χωριό (μονοθέσιο, διθέσιο)
   2. Ημιαστικό 4. Άλλο (εξήγησε).....

4. Πόσους μαθητές έχει / είχε η τάξη σου;
   1. 5–10 4. 23–28
   2. 11–16 5. 29–34
   3. 17–22 6. 35 και πάνω

5. Σε ποιό επίπεδο τάξεων διδάσκεις;
   1. Α–Β 2. Γ–Δ 3. Ε–ΣΤ

6. Ακαδημαϊκά προσόντα (σημείωσε όσα σε αφορούν)
   1. Πτυχίο Ακαδημίας
   2. Μετεκπαίδευση (ΜΔΔΕ / ΣΕΛΔΕ)
   3. Άλλο (εξήγησε).....

7. Προγραμματίζεις γραπτά τις αξιολογικές σου ενέργειες;
   1. Καθημερινά 3. Μερικές φορές 5. Πάντοτε
   2. Συχνά 4. Σπάνια

8. Περίγραψε μερικές αξιολογικές πρακτικές που εφαρμόζεις.

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9. Ποιὰ μορφὴ ἐχουν οι αξιολογήσεις σου στην εργασία των μαθητών; (Κύκλωσε ὁσα σε αφορούν).

1. Αριθμητικὴ βαθμολογία
2. Αλφαβητικὴ βαθμολογία (Α, Β, Γ)
3. Σύντομα σχόλια (Καλὰ, πολὺ καλὰ, πρὸσεχε, κτλ.)
4. Συγκεκριμένα, λεπτομερὴ σχόλια
5. Σκίτσα, αστεράκια, προσωπάκια, κτλ.
6. Άλλο (εξήγησε).....

10. Σε ποιὸ βαθμὸ επηρεάζουν τις αξιολογικές σου κρίσεις οι παρακάτω παράγοντες; (κύκλωνε ένα αριθμὸ στην κλίμακα)

		Καθόλου επιρροὴ					Μεγάλη επιρροὴ
1.	Διευθυντὴς	0	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Σχολικὸς Σύμβουλος	0	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Οι γονεὶς	0	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Οι συνάδελφοι	0	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Το Αναλυτικὸ πρόγραμμα	0	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Άλλο (εξήγησε)	0	1	2	3	4	5

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11. Νομίζεις ὁτι η αξιολόγηση βοηθὰ τη διδασκαλία και τη μάθηση;
Αν ναι, με ποιὸ τρόπο;
Αν ὁχι, γιατι ὁχι; (δικαιολόγησε την απάντησὴ σου)

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12. Πόσο συχνά αξιολογείς τα παρακάτω μαθήματα;
(Βάλε ένα τικ για κάθε μάθημα)

	Καθημερινά	Συχνά	Μερικές φορές	Σπάνια	Ποτέ
1. Ανάγνωση.....					
2. Μαθηματικά.....					
3. Γραφή.....					
4. Μελέτη περ.....					
5. Αισθητική Αγ.....					

13. Κύκλωσε από τα παρακάτω χαρακτηριστικά των μαθητών τα (5) που θεωρείς σημαντικώτερα για αξιολόγηση.

1	Ανεξαρτησία	4	Μνημονικό
2	Αυτοπεποίθηση	15	Νοικοκυροσύνη
3	Πλούσιες γνώσεις	16	Πειθαρχία
4	Δεξιότητες	17	Προσοχή στο μάθημα
5	Δημιουργικότητα	18	Προσπάθεια
6	Ειλικρίνεια	19	Συμμετοχή στο μάθημα
7	Επιμονή	20	Συνεργατικότητα
8	Εμφάνιση	21	Συμπεριφορά
9	Εργατικότητα	22	Υπακοή
10	Ευγένεια	23	Υπομονή
11	Εφυία	24	Φαντασία
12	Ησυχία στο μάθημα	25	Ωριμότητα
13	Κριτική ικανότητα	26	Άλλο (εξήγησε).....

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14. Πόσο συχνά δίνεις τέστς δικής σου κατασκευής;

1.	Καθημερινά	4.	Σπάνια
2.	Συχνά (1 εβδομαδιαία)	5.	Ποτέ
3.	Μερικές φορές		

15. Εξηγείς στους μαθητές τα κριτήρια που κάνουν αποδεκτή μια εργασία πριν τους την αναθέσεις;

1.	Καθημερινά	4.	Σπάνια
2.	Συχνά	5.	Ποτέ
3.	Μερικές φορές		

16. Σημείωσε όσους από τους παρακάτω παράγοντες νομίζεις ότι περιορίζουν τις αξιολογικές σου ενέργειες.

1. Σχολικός Σύμβουλος
2. Διευθυντής
3. Απαιτήσεις άλλων μαθημάτων
4. Οι αξιολογικές στάσεις των συναδέλφων μου
5. Προσωπικοί λόγοι (ιδεολογία, κτλ.)
6. Άλλο (εξήγησε).....

17. Πώς χρησιμοποιείς τα αποτελέσματα της αξιολόγησης;
   1. Μόνο τα καταγράφω
   2 Ενημερώνω το Διευθυντή και τα βιβλία Μητρώου
   3. Ενημερώνω τους γονείς
   4. Οργανώνω εξατομικευμένη διδασκαλία
   5. Δεν τα καταγράφω καθόλου
   6. Άλλο (εξήγησε).....

18. Δίνεις εργασίες για το σπίτι;
Άν ναι, τί είδους;
Άν όχι, γιατί όχι;

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19. Πόσο συχνά ελέγχεις τις εργασίες που αναθέτεις;

1. Καθημερινά
2. Συχνά
3. Μερικές φορές
4. Σπάνια
5. Ποτέ

20. Γιατί σχολιάζεις προφορικά και γραπτά τις προσπάθειες των μαθητών;

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21. Πού ἐμαθες να αξιολογεἰς;

1. Κατὰ τη διἀρκεια των σπουδὠν μου
2. Συζητὠντας με συναδἐλφους
3. Στην τἀξη εμπειρικἀ
4. Ἀλλο (εξἠγησε).....

22. Τἰ θα πρὀτεινες για την αποτελεσματικὠτερη χρἠση της αξιολὀγησης στην τἀξη, για τη βελτἰωση της διδασκαλἰας και της μἀθησης;

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23. Ἀλλα σχὀλια;

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Σε ευχαριστὠ για τη βοἠθειἀ σου. Ἐλεγξε μἠπως κἀποια ερὠτηση δεν απαντἠθηκε.

Με εκτἰμηση

Γιἀννης Μαυρομμἀτης

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APPENDIX 2

Remaining cross tabulation tables of the questionnaire data.

CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT PURPOSES

Table 2.1. Assessment utility by experience (cases %)e

	(0-8)	(9-16)	(17-35)
Diagnostic tool	23.8	23.1	9.7
Destroys T/p relations	5.7	3.5	3.2
Enhances self-esteem	20.5	25.9	22.6
Motivates learning	33.6	31.5	35.5
Feedback to the pupil	19.7	22.4	12.9
Remedy of weaknesses	19.7	11.9	12.9
Teacher feedback	39.3	50.3	16.1
Fosters self-awareness	3.3	7.7	4.8
Recognition of efforts	17.2	10.5	27.4
Communication to parents	3.3	4.2	.0
For competition	10.7	10.5	33.9
Teacher controls	1.6	4.2	4.8
	n=122	n=143	n=62

Table 2.2. Assessment utility by status(%)

	College	Classroom
Diagnostic tool	19.2	22.6
Destroys T/p relations	2.7	6.2
Enhances pupils' self-esteem	30.2	14.4
Motivates learning	25.8	41.8
Feedback to the pupil	23.1	15.1
Remedy of weaknesses	14.3	15.8
Teacher feedback	50.0	26.7
Fosters self-awareness	4.9	6.2
Recognition of efforts	11.0	22.6
Communication to parents	2.2	4.1
For constructive competition	9.3	22.6
Teacher controls children	3.3	3.4
	n=182	n=146

Table 2.3. Assessment utility by school location (%)

	Urban	Rural
Diagnostic tool	23.7	12.5
Destroys T/p relations	6.1	6.3
Enhances pupils' self-esteem	15.3	6.3
Motivates learning	42.7	31.3
Feedback to the pupil	16.0	12.5
Remedy of weaknesses	15.3	18.8
Teacher feedback	27.5	18.8
Fosters self-awareness	5.3	12.5
Recognition of efforts	20.6	37.5
Communication to parents	4.6	.0
For constructive competition	20.6	43.8
Teacher controls children	3.4	.0
	n=131	n=16

Comments purposes

Table 3.1. Comments purposes by teaching level (cases %)

	(1-2)	(3-4)	(5-6)
Encourage efforts	50.5	42.5	45.4
Learning Motivation	5.4	12.3	11.8
Stimulate competition	20.9	17.0	13.4
Rewards for efforts	19.8	17.0	13.4
Feedback to pupils	27.5	25.5	24.4
Remediation	15.4	20.8	23.5
Inform parents	9.9	5.7	5.0
For class participation 3.3	.9	3.4	
Improve T/p relations	6.6	7.5	5.0
Strength self-confidence	7.7	9.4	5.0
To imitate good peers	3.3	.9	1.7
To improve performance	2.8	2.8	4.4
	n=91	n=106	n=119

Table 3.2 Comments purposes by experience

	(0-8)	(9-16)	(17-35)
Encourage efforts	37.4	47.8	57.8
Learning Motivation	4.9	19.6	15.6
Stimulate competition	19.5	15.9	14.1
Rewards for efforts	22.0	13.0	25.0
Feedback to pupils	37.4	21.7	9.4
Remediation	28.5	17.4	9.4
Inform parents	7.3	7.2	3.1
For class participation	.8	4.3	3.1
Improve T/p relations	8.1	5.1	7.8
Strength self-confidence	7.3	7.2	7.8
To imitate good peers	1.6	2.9	.0
To improve performance	8.1	10.1	15.6
	n=123	n=138	n=64

Table 3.3. Comments purposes by school location (cases %)

	Urban	Rural
Encourage efforts	0.4	20.0
Learning Motivation	9.8	13.3
Stimulate competition	17.3	20.0
Rewards for efforts	29.3	6.7
Feedback to pupils	27.1	26.7
Remediation	16.5	26.7
Inform parents	4.5	20.0
For class participation	4.5	.0
Improve T/p relations	9.0	6.7
Strength self-confidence	7.5	13.3
To imitate good peers	4.5	.0
To improve performance	6.8	46.7
	n=133	n=15

Using assessment results

Table 4.1 Use of assessment results by teacher status(%)

	College	Classroom
Just record	3.2.	1.9
Inform school records	7.8	5.8
Inform parents	68.7	71.4
Individual instruction	91.7	81.2
Do not record	1.4	1.9
Other	21.2	19.1
	n=217	n=154

* Individual teaching by qualifications: (ss x^2=5.4 p<.05)

* Individual teaching by teacher status: (ss x^2=8.11 p<.01)

ASSESSMENT IN DAILY CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Planning assessments in writing

Table 5.1 Planning by qualifications (cases %)

	Basic	Higher
Daily	51.4	42.2
Often	29.5	33.3
Sometimes/rarely	19.0	24.4
ns	n=105	n=258

Table 5.2 Planning by status (%)

	College	Classroom
Daily	38.2	22.6
Often	34.4	29.1
Sometimes/rarely	27.4	16.6
ss $x^2=10.3$ $p<.01$	n=212	n=151

Table 5.3 Planning by school location (%)

	Urban	Rural
Daily	52.6	73.3
Often	29.9	20.0
Sometimes/rarely	17.5	6.7
ns	n=137	n=15

Table 6.1. Assessment practices by experience (cases %)

	(0-8)	(9-17)	(18-35)
Textbook tasks	28.1	33.3	28.3
Teacher-made tests	25.6	28.1	21.7
Worksheets, essays	29.8	31.4	36.7
Oral questions	52.1	50.3	51.7
Short comments	30.6	27.5	33.3
Rewards for efforts	13.2	16.3	21.7
Observations	15.7	9.2	11.7
Correction of work	5.0	5.2	3.3
Grades	10.7	14.4	5.0
Marks	9.9	9.8	5.0
Peer assessments	17.4	15.7	18.3
Class participation	9.9	5.2	5.0
Whole child's assessment	9.1	8.5	15.0
Homework	10.7	12.4	16.7
	n=121	n=153	n=60

Table 6.2 Assessment practices by school location (cases %)

	Urban	Rural
Textbook tasks	28.3	12.5
Teacher-made tests	20.0	37.5
Worksheets, essays	30.0	37.5
Oral questions	46.7	75.0
Short comments	34.2	43.8
Rewards for efforts	16.7	37.5
Observations	16.7	37.5
Correction of work	4.2	12.5
Grades	10.0	.0
Marks	8.3	12.5
Peer assessments	15.8	31.3
Class participation	3.3	12.5
Whole child assessment	12.5	12.5
Homework	16.7	12.5
	n=120	n=16

Teacher's responses on pupil's efforts

Table 7.2. Written responses by qualifications (%)

	Basic	Higher
Marks+other	54.6	40.5
Grades+other	10.2	16.7
Short comments+other	25.0	26.9
Detail comments+other	4.6	8.3
Other	5.6	7.6
ns	n=108	n=264

Table 7.3 Written responses by teaching experience(%)

	(0-8)	(9-16)	(17-35)
Marks+other	39.4	45.2	53.5
Grades+other	11.4	16.1	18.3
Short comments+other	31.8	25.6	16.9
Detail comments+other	7.6	7.1	7.0
Other	9.8	6.0	4.2
ns	n=132	n=168	n=71

Homework

Table 9.1 Homework purposes by experience (cases %)

	(0-8)	(9-16)	(17-35)
No homework	5.8	13.3	14.3
Consolidates learning	97.1	88.1	110.7
Complete work	25.2	20.0	8.9
Fosters investigation	11.7	16.3	21.4
To assess their work	6.8	5.9	7.1
Preparation	31.1	24.4	32.1
Involves parents	2.9	3.0	.0
Independently working	6.8	6.7	8.9
	n=103	n=135	n=56

Table 9.2 Homework purposes by school location (cases %)

	Urban	Rural
No homework	11.1	36.4
Consolidates learning	107.7	90.9
Complete work	18.8	.0
Fosters investigation	12.0	18.2
Evaluation tasks	10.3	.0
Preparation for next	35.0	9.1
Involves parents	5.1	.0
Independently working	10.3	9.1
	n=117	n=11

Checking homework frequency

Table 10.1 Checking homework by teaching level (%)

	(1-2)	(3-4)	(5-6)
Daily	81.8	71.1	68.6
Often	18.2	24.8	27.1
Sometimes/rarely	.0	1.4	1.7
	n=99	n=121	n=140

Stating standards of work quality

Table 11.1 Stating standards of work by qualifications

	Basic	Higher
Daily	35.8	33.5
Often	22.6	31.9
Sometimes/rarely	41.5	34.6
ns	n=106	n=260

Table 11.2 Stating standards of work by experience

	(0-8)	(9-16)	(17-35)
Daily	38.2	32.5	29.6
Often	22.1	34.4	31.0
Sometimes/rarely	39.7	33.1	39.4
ns	n=131	n=163	n=71

Table 11.3 Stating standards of work by school location (%)

	Urban	Rural
Daily	20.4	75.0
Often	29.9	12.5
Sometimes/rarely	49.6	12.5

WHAT TO ASSESS?

Assessing different subjects

Table 12.1 Assessing Reading by qualifications (%)

	Basic	Higher
Daily	62.5	57.5
Often	28.8	36.4
Sometimes/rarely	8.7	6.1
ns	n=104	n=261

Table 12.2 Assessing Reading by school location (%)

	Urban	Rural
Daily	51.9	100.0
Often	37.8	.0
Sometimes/rarely	10.4	.0
ss x^2=13.5 p<.01	n=135	n=16

Table 12.3 Assessing Science by qualifications (%)

	Basic	Higher
Daily	20.0	25.7
Often	25.3	39.4
Sometimes/rarely	54.7	34.9
ss x^2=11.4 p<.01	n=95	n=249

Table 12.4 Assessing science by teacher status (%)

	College	Classroom
Daily	27.1	19.7
Often	38.2	31.4
Sometimes/rarely	34.8	48.9
ss x^2=6.9 p<.05	n=207	n=137

Table 13.2 Seven modal traits by gender (cases %)

	Male	Female
Creativity	49.4	49.4
Industry	46.3	46.5
Critical ability	69.5	71.5
Efforts	46.3	51.7
Class participation	43.9	32.0
*Co-operation	43.2	32.0
*Knowledge	28.0	34.3
	n=164	n=172

Table 13.3 seven modal traits by teacher status

	College	Classroom
Creativity	58.9	36.4
Industry	44.2	50.0
Critical ability	70.1	70.7
Efforts	50.8	46.4
Class participation	42.6	58.6
*Co-operation	43.1	30.0
*Knowledge	26.4	37.9
	n=197	n=140

Table 13.4 Seven modal traits by school location

	Urban	Rural
Creativity	36.0	43.8
Industry	52.0	37.5
Critical ability	70.4	75.0
Efforts	42.4	75.0
Class participation	61.6	37.5
*Co-operation	28.8	43.8
*Knowledge	39.2	25.0
	n=125	n=16

PROBLEMS IN APPLYING CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT

Table 14.1 Assessment restrictions by gender (%)

	Male	Female
Adviser	20.1	21.0
Head	4.9	2.2
Other subjects	22.6	23.2
Time	50.3	58.0
Insuf.asmt. competence 62.2	55.8	
Colleagues	9.1	7.2
Personal reasons	6.1	8.3
Other	8.6	8.2
	n=162	n=183

Table 14.2 Assessment restrictions by qualifications (%)

	Basic	Higher
Adviser	18.4	21.4
Head	1.9	4.1
Other subjects	27.2	21.4
Time	61.8	51.4
Insuf.asmt. competence	51.5	61.7
Colleagues	4.9	9.5
Personal reasons	6.8	7.4
Other	9.5	7.9
ns	n=105	n=241

Table 14.3 Assessment restrictions by school location

	Urban	Rural
Adviser	20.6	12.5
Head	2.3	.0
Other subjects	32.8	18.8
Time	59.2	75.0
Insuf.asmt. competence	51.1	62.5
Colleagues	6.1	.0
Personal reasons	5.4	.0
Other	8.7	.0
	n=133	n=16

Which factors influence teacher assessment?

Table 15.2 Head's influence by gender and overall (%)

Head	Male	Female	Overall
No influence	82.8	87.9	85.5
Little influence	15.7	8.6	12.0
Sufficient influence	1.5	3.6	2.5
	n=134	n=140	N=276

Table 15.3 Adviser's influence by gender and overall (%)

	Male	Female	Overall
No influence	54.3	55.3	55.1
Little influence	29.3	30.0	29.5
Sufficient influence	16.4	14.7	15.4
	n=140	n=150	N=292

Table 15.4 Adviser's influence by status (cases %)

	College	Classroom
No influence	62.5	45.2
Little influence	25.6	34.7
Sufficient influence	11.8	20.2
ss x^2=9.04 p<.05	n=168	n=124

Table 15.5 Parents' influence by gender and overall (%)

	Male	Female	Overall
No influence	59.95	54.5	57.0
Little influence	29.9	38.6	34.5
Sufficient influence	10.2	6.9	8.5
	n=137	n=145	N=284

Table 15.6 Parents' influence by status (cases %)

	College	Classroom
No influence	58.9	54.3
Little influence	29.8	41.4
Sufficient influence	11.3	4.3
ss x^2=6.91 p<.05	n=168	n=116

Table 15.7 Curriculum influence by teaching level (%)

	(1-2)	(3-4)	(5-6)
No influence	38.2	20.6	27.1
Little influence	30.9	35.1	23.4
Sufficient influence	30.9	44.3	49.5
ss x^2=10.36 p<.05	n=68	n=97	n=107

Table 15.8 Curriculum influence by experience (cases %)

	(0-8)	(9-17)	(17-35)
No influence	32.1	27.2	18.8
Little influence	29.2	28.0	31.3
Sufficient influence	38.7	44.8	50.0
	n=106	n=125	n=48

Table 16.1 Other factors' influence by teaching level (%)

	(1-2)	(3-4)	(5-6)
No influence	5.7	2.7	4.3
Little influence	37.1	27.0	12.8
Sufficient influence	57.1	70.3	83.0
	n=35	n=37	n=47

Table 17.1. Assessing competence origin by status (cases %)

	College	Classroom
During studies+other	15.6	7.8
From colleagues+other	5.6	4.7
From experience+other	78.9	87.5
ns	n=180	n=128

Suggestions for improvement

Table 18.1 Suggestions by status

	College	Classroom
Assessment training	8.3	27.3
Parents involvement	2.1	11.4
Descriptive assessment	16.7	2.3
Holistic assessment	.0	4.5
Cooperative spirit	10.4	4.5
Standardised tests	31.3	25.0
Encourage efforts	8.3	2.3
More time	31.3	29.5
Remedial classes	2.1	4.5
	n=48	n=44

Table 18.2 Suggestions by experience (cases %)

	(0-8)	(9-16)	(17-35)
Assessment training	13.3	18.6	21.1
Parents involvement	10.0	.0	15.8
Descriptive assessment	10.0	14.0	.0
Holistic assessment	.0	4.7	.0
Cooperative spirit	16.7	4.7	.0
More tests	30.0	30.2	21.1
Encourage efforts	.0	4.7	15.8
More time	33.3	27.9	31.6
Remedial classes	.0	2.3	10.5
	n=30	n=43	n=19